

VICO

A course given in the Autumn Quarter, 1963

in the

Department of Political Science

The University of Chicago

by

Professor Leo Strauss

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Because of defective tapes, lectures 8, 10, and 16 on Vico  
have not been recorded here.

Lecture I

Vico: Introduction, September 30, 1963

This is the first time I give a seminar on Vico. I planned to give one some years ago, but at this time there was no copy available. The reason why I never gave a course on Vico is very simple. I never studied Vico. And this has not only private reason, therefore I would like to explain this, that a man cannot study everything, not even every philosopher of political logic. One cannot study all worthwhile thinkers in the proper manner. The reason was this: When I began to study I was, as it were, guided by some one to another. I was, for example, interested in Hobbes, and Hobbes showed me the way to Plato to Aristotle to Machiavelli. And then Hobbes somehow leads you to Locke and so on, and I studied them all - Montesquieu and Rousseau, two men who come in a way closest to Vico, but since they never referred to Vico, I did not see any reason why I must study Vico. Of course I had read about Vico in the literature, but whatever was there was not sufficiently attractive to me to devote serious study to it. In a word, what became very clear was that Vico had very much to do with the emergence of modern historical criticism. Two famous events in historical criticism of modern times, a criticism of Homer as a German

and the criticism of early Roman history by \_\_\_\_\_ for early 19th century. This had been anticipated by Vico a hundred years before. This is certainly an achievement, but the fundamental point in regard to historical criticism - the very principle of it - had been stated much earlier in the 17th century by Spinoza in regard to the Old Testament. It was a much greater issue than Homer and early Roman history. However important Vico may be in this respect he doesn't have the same fundamental importance as Spinoza in this regard. It was one reason why I did not turn to Vico.

But I think the time has come now for me to study Vico. Now, where does he come in on the basis of what I, for instance, happen to know? I think one can give a very simple answer. The problem of history. Now let me try to state that problem. Since there are quite a few among you whom I do not know I will have to say things which others among you have heard but I will state the things as simply as I can, because I trust you either to interrupt me or to start a discussion when I have reached some point of rest. Now let me state the problem of history as it is known today and as it affects us today without any regard to Vico first. Political philosophy can be defined as the quest for the good society or the just society. Now this question has been raised since the very beginning in Greece, and the response was that we had "n" answers to this question. "N" can be two digit, three digit, whatever you like. And this phenomenon can be called the anarchy within political philosophy. No general progress as we have it in physics or the other natural sciences, but an anarchy of the answers given by a variety of thinkers. This observation - which everyone can easily make - leads to scepticism. Is political philosophy possible at all? Because there is no general progress in the way you have it in the exact sciences especially. Then some man whose name I will divulge very soon made this simple observation: If we look at these doctrines: A, B, C, D, E, and F which are chaotic events, if we take a somewhat broader view and extend our view beyond the doctrines themselves, then this chaos comes to order

because we see then a one to one coordination of doctrines to times to historical situation. A very simple case: Aristotle has the doctrine of properties which contradicts very much Locke's doctrine of properties. But if you consider for one moment that Aristotle wrote in the 4th century B.C. and Locke wrote in the 17th century in England then it makes sense. Aristotle, as it were, is an exponent of Greek society or of a certain part of Greek society, and Locke is an exponent of a certain part of English society in the 17th century.

One can say that this was Hegel's point although it is a very crude statement of Hegel's point I'm sure. Doctrines are functions of times. So we have then replaced chaos by one, but naturally we pay a heavy price, because if this is taken as I have stated it, it means there cannot be the true political philosophy, true for all times, since every doctrine will be relative to its time. Every thinker is - in the words of Hegel - a product of his times and not only in the way in which he shaves or does not shave or wears ties or shoes, but in his highest and most pure thought he is a son of his times.

One can modify that as another German thinker did and say not the son of his time but step-son of his time, because he is not quite at home in his time. But of course the step-son of his time and not the step-son of any other time. This correction only preserves Hegel's thesis. He means - in other words - that all systems (if we may speak of systems) are equal in this decided respect - they are all at best an adequate expression of their times. They are not simply true.

We may go a step beyond that and speak of the equality of all epochs. All epochs are equal, only they are different in many respects. For example, all epochs are equal - as one historian put it - in the sight of God; they are equal. For example, when spoke of the decay of Rome, of the Roman Empire, the tyranny of the emperors - that is one thing and the other is the emergence of Christianity. So you have decay; you have also something new. Fundamentally that is true of every fact and therefore one must speak of the equality of all epochs.

An implication of this view is the equality of all cultures. This was the kind of popular idea that one finds in Stongler. but it was then taken over by American anthropology especially, and there it was accepted with this modification. Stongler spoke, one can say, of the equality of all high cultures, and anthropology teaches the equality of all cultures - high and low are not scientifically useful distinctions. I suppose these things are very as this is the now prevailing way of looking at things. It's familiar to all of us. I have to mention it because the thing which escapes us most is the air which we breathe which is - as you know - invisible and therefore we can dismiss it. We look through it to the dear and other things, but we do not see it. But this air through which we see is in a way more important than anything which we see through it because it determines our way of seeing things.

Now this is one point, the equality of all ages, of all cultures. And then we have something else in the same world, and I believe that what I am speaking about is not any recedite scholarship,



although it is grounded in recent scholarship, but things which you find everyday in the newspaper. The other thing - underdeveloped notions. What does this mean? It merely means inequality - some are developed, others are underdeveloped. What is implied in this notion of underdeveloped is progress, not equality of all ages and of all cultures. Our ordinary unreflected thinking is characterized by the coexistence - another fashionable word - by the coexistence of this kind of egalitarianism and of this other kind of inegalitarianism. I trust that the two expressions are now clear. Now if we look at the relation of these two concepts, progress on the one hand, equality of ages and cultures on the other, we see that the egalitarian notion of history was preceded by the progressivist notion. Everyone knows that in the 18th century was the famous age of progress, and that this egalitarian notion emerged only in the course of the 19th century.

Now what is the stronghold of the concept of progress today? I'm not speaking now of any political trend because everyone would of course say Communism. But I am speaking of something which is very powerful in the Western world. That stronghold is, of course, science, the thing which we must speak of as progress. Now science in fact causes a great difficulty for historicism. Let us define provisionally historicism used as all cultures and all epochs are equal, which is a very superficial definition but which is sufficient for our present purposes. Because science seems to transcend all cultures. There is no Chinese physics in contradistinction to Venezuelan physics. So science is the great stronghold of a thought which defies the finality of our historical limitation. But this is not quite so simple.

Stengler, who did more than any other individual, I believe, in popularizing the historicist's view, denied this very notion of science. He said what we call science is modern Western science belonging to this particular culture which he calls, for certain reasons, the culture (it doesn't make any difference) - modern Western culture - it belongs to it. And that this science proved to be communicable all over the globe does not contradict its fundamentally Western character. It simply means that Western man by his science succeeds in Westernizing the whole globe - that's all. It does not become universal on this score.

But more precisely, when one analyzes science in the way in which students of science try to analyze it, they arrive at their fundamental premises. These fundamental premises are to be defined more precisely as fundamental hypotheses, hypotheses which can never become facts - proven - but which remain hypotheses throughout. These hypotheses prove to be, as people say, logically adequate. It would have been as feasible to adopt other fundamental hypotheses as those which were in fact adopted when modern science came into being in the 17th century.

So what is at the bottom of our science? Is there not any logic or other necessity that is historically contingent? We cannot now jump out of that trend because we are in it - because we would be killed immediately. But that doesn't do away with the fact that the fundamental premises have this historically contingent character. So, in other words, an analysis of science might very well lead to a confirmation of the view that all thought is fundamentally historical. This is, of course, not to deny that -

at least on the surface - natural science keeps alive the old notion that generally knowledge essentially transcends the variety of culture or history. And this is indicated in the following very simple way. We understand by science, especially in the English language, natural science. It is the science of nature. Now when this notion of nature emerged and was developed by the Greeks, nature was understood above all in contradistinction to what the Greeks called nomos which we may translate by such things as law, convention, custom. What now is called a culture or a civilization was called by the Greeks nomos in contradistinction to the word nature. We can say, therefore, and that is somewhat better than what I said before, that historicism - this power which is so powerful today - consists in the interpretation of nomos or the sequence of such nomoi, nomoi being the plural of nomos, in the interpretation of nomos as a sequence of nomoi as history. There is no vision of history earlier as I will explain later.

Now, that such a substitution has taken place is indicated by the following fact. With the emergence of this historical approach, institutions of all kinds which were formally understood to have been man-made, not necessarily by an individual - it could have been done by a sequence of generations - were now understood to have grown - not made, but grown. That was the key distinction, that grows is the original meaning of nature. Things which were originally regarded as radically non-natural were now regarded as natural in a higher power. There is one point of importance which I will deal with later.

Now, let us first reconsider the facts from which we start today as obvious and undeniable - the variety of cultures. . . . Yes?

Student: Before you continue may I ask one question?

Strauss: Yes?

Student: I didn't understand what your argument was that we could show that science might be based on historical premises.

Strauss: No, if we show, for example, that modern science rests on certain fundamental hypotheses which are, as we would say, logically adequate - meaning one could extend a chosen different hypothesis. Alright, one could say that if we had chosen different hypotheses we would never have this wonderful modern technological achievement. And then the question of course arises: Are these achievements so wonderful in every respect? Think of nuclear development. . . .

Student: inaudible comment regarding expression "Logically adequate"

Strauss: The German does not necessarily mean - did I use the term in German?

Student: I might have misunderstood you . . .

Strauss: No, but it could very well be an unexplicable and irreducible choice. Perhaps I will extend this briefly. The most common form of historicism of course is this: to say that it must be - that there is no choice. All these thoughts belong to this

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superstructure - they are political - Locke's theory of government - they belong to this superstructure. And if you want to understand Aristotle or Locke you have to go back to the infrastructure, to the modes of production in Greece on the one hand and in 17th century England on the other. Of course none of these doctrines is true - they are expressions of a certain situation and fulfill a certain social function. They are not true. The truth is the economic or rather productive basis - you know that. The Marxists, or certain equivalents of marxism - they claim they know the truth, the transhistorical truth about this, and that the modes of production are the basic thing. Whereas strictly speaking it is true that this itself is an historically conditioned way of looking at things. The Marxist in a way claims to be outside of the historical process, in a way. Whereas strictly looked at no one can be outside of the historical condition. Marxism itself is one historically conditioned theory which has a certain function - obviously - but it is not true. Now Mr. \_\_\_\_\_, did you want to say something?

Student: Inaudible

Strauss: You and I have here to rely very much on other people. But I can only say that one of the profoundest students of this problem who has nothing whatever to do with positivism, saw through that very notion. \_\_\_\_\_ arrived at the same conclusion. So there may be something to that.

Student: It may very well be, it is often said. But I really never knew what meaning to attach to it. I think that it is true and after our discussion tonight . . .

Strauss: But in Hume the problem did not possibly exist because for Hume this so-called problem of history did not exist. For example, when Hume speaks of causality he means a cause all men at all times understand by cause the same thing.

Student: Inaudible.

Strauss: Sure, but there is no question of historicity. Here is a question which resists. Causality means very different things in different cultures. This meaning which it has in modern times is a specific interpretation of causality. Without this specific interpretation of causality one cannot be a scientist in the modern sense. \_\_\_\_\_ speaks of causality; everyone speaks of it; everyone who has ever related to the question, "Why?" on any occasion has spoken in causal terms. But this is more specific. Now this problem diverges from what I wanted to say,

Now the variety of culture is, of course, undeniable. But the order one can say was always known, always known. When Odysseus made his travels he saw the variety of different cultures in tribes, but it was not known the variety of cultures. This is, of course, not merely a verbal form, but we try to make this clear. There are the various tribes or nations. They have different institutions and give different accounts of their institutions and of the world as a whole. But one thing is here understood when Odysseus traveled around or any other traveler - Marco Polo and so forth. All these various tribes lived within a whole common to all men. They all live on the earth and beneath the

outer heavens, and that is elementary. When these older travelers looked at the variety of men, then they tended to find the characteristic of each tribe in what the little tribe looked up to, what they regarded as the higher - say their god or their worship of the gods and so forth. In other words there exists, if we can say, the ceiling - for every human community - that to which it looks up, whatever that may be. But regarding this feeling that is found by traveling, there is profound disagreement among the various varieties of the human race.

Now let us look at the flooring. The flooring has this characteristic, that they all agree regarding it. The heaven is above; the earth below; that men are not horses; that men, women and children are different kinds of men, and so on. These we call the flooring. We can reach immediately an agreement between human beings regarding these matters. The disagreement is on the heights. The agreement is regarding, we can say, the lower. Regarding these elementary things there is knowledge. All men know that. Regarding the heights there is only opinion. Hence this is the first stop of philosophy. Since there is opinion we must try to replace opinion by knowledge. We must try to reach knowledge of the higher by starting from the primary knowledge which we have regarding the flooring, that about which there is universal agreement.

Now let us call these things from which we start - heaven, earth, men, women, children - absolute facts, facts which are not relative to any particular tribe. Then it means we ascend from the absolute facts which underlie and make possible all change.

Now this view can be questioned in modern times. We have no knowledge whatever of absolute facts of any kind. The man who said this so emphatically said, "We have no knowledge of things as things themselves. We have only a phenomenon." Our knowledge consists of two ingredients: sensation and the form by which these sensations are organized, the things are interpreted. Surely there cannot be any knowledge of the higher things. The "highest" (in quotation marks) at which we arrive when we analyze our knowledge are the forms of perceiving or interpreting. And that - I am thinking of Kant - Kant calls the categories. Now this step was decisive. When we speak today in the most unsophisticated anthropology, we think in these Kantian terms. Whether he knows it or not is unimportant. So then let me come back to these two points. The older way of looking, you understand, is a tribe in terms of what it looks up to. And the present way, you understand, a tribe in terms of the categories by which it perceives and thinks and exists. When a man confronted for the first time by this existence of the variety of opinion of various tribes regarding the higher things, then he can - at least provisionally - suspend judgement and say, "I don't know. Maybe these Spartans are right, or these Persians, or the Romans and so forth."

Regarding the categories you cannot suspend judgement because any thought - however sceptic - presupposes to use the exercise of these categories. Every thought, including the most radical scepticism, presupposes the functioning of the categories. The ultimate consequences of this: there are strictly speaking no facts. What we call fact is already the product of an interpretation of certain sense data.

Now Kant took it for granted that this interpretation, if it is correct, will always take the same form among men. After Kant a great change occurred in the following manner. It was asserted that man, perceiving or interpreting, changes radically the point of view from which different ages or different cultures look at things - are radically different. All thought, all thought, if from such a specific point of view is historical.

But what becomes of our simple scheme when we see two people of very different tribes, different languages, barter a horse or two cows or whatever it may be when they both know what are horses and cows. Are there not such facts which are independent of historical variety? Kant says no. No fact goes unchanged from one culture to another. What various people look up to as the highest, this is in itself already a consequence of their point of view, of their horizon, of their categories. And that horizon gives a specific character to everything which appears within the horizon, be it as trivial as a poppy. What goes unchanged from one horizon to another is only something unsayable. For instance it is a leg, or hul, or koley, whatever the word in the different languages are. They mean something different because - you only have to look at the various metaphoric uses of these terms in the different languages to see that one and the same term has a different aura and therefore a different meaning in every particular language. We never reach the absolute facts. Everything said by any man of any time already belongs to a specific culture.

Now while in Kant difference in words is a condition of this historical approach it is not the sufficient historical condition because of the absence from Kant of this so-called historical culture. But if we limit ourselves for one moment to Kant, what is the key observation of Kant in his own words. Answer: understanding is not in any way perception, as it was in the older conception. Understanding means putting a form on matter, forming something. The understanding prescribes nature a floor. Fundamental laws of nature are not the causal science, but they are imposed by the human understanding on nature.

Now Vice, who enters at this time, said we understand only what we make. And Kant said, in effect, we understand only nature because the human understanding prescribes nature its laws. But Vice, who was two generations prior to Kant, seems to have gone much beyond Kant in preparing historicism.

Now, we plan to study Vice in order to reach a somewhat better understanding of the problem of history. We must make clear to ourselves that this problem of history, as I tried to suggest, did not exist for earlier ages. It emerged only about 150 years ago, but it acquired a true sharpness only in our own age. This profound change must not be obscured as it is almost always in present-day discussions. For example, people today find philosophy of history in all times and ages. I am vexed, because I don't know. That there are people who have written about the philosophy of history of Confucius, the \_\_\_\_\_ and so on, because I knew of parallel texts. Now some doubt has arisen in certain cases and therefore people speak in the case of Augustine, for example, of not the philosophy of history but the theology of history. But even this is a question of expression.

Let us look for one moment at the term history. It is a Greek word, historia which means inquiry. When I went to school we had a branch of study called natural history, description of possums and tigers, you know? I don't know, today it might be called biology. But history means inquiry and therefore also recording the results of the inquiry. But it can soon mean also, especially, such inquiry as calls for inquiry with human beings. For example, in order to find out about rats, it is not essential to ask other human beings about them. You can look it up in books. But there are things which we can know only by asking other human beings. For example, about what happened prior to your birth. Then you ask older people and see what happened two generations before. Because whether you ask them while they are still alive - your grandparents or great-grandparents - or you find documents which they left behind, doesn't make any essential difference. So therefore history took on the meaning of inquiry about such things as can be known only by human record. Let me say the past, the human past. History then means inquiry about the past or what happened around you, of course, and the record of this. It never meant the object of this kind of inquiry. Today it means also, and above all, the object of this. When a man speaks of the historical process, he doesn't mean the process which historians record. He may also mean that, but it's not the primary meaning. When people speak today of nature and history, nature is one field, one region, and history is another field, another region. This notion is very recent.

Even the very term history, the very word history, whatever it might mean, is by no means something which must be taken for granted. How often have I read that the great importance of the Old Testament is the discovery of history? One simple question: What is the Hebrew term for history? Historia, the Greek or Latin word adopted very late. What one could say in the Old Testament is the word dobray hayomin which means chronicles or annals or toledot which means generation. The latter word is very interesting because it was used for some things as the generations of man, some chapters begin this way, and then there follows a history of these generations. But this word generation was used earlier as a translation for the Greek word for nature. Because generation is, of course a natural concept. So this great root of Western thought, the Old Testament, does not know of history in any strict sense. Where does it emerge? In the early 19th century, for the first time, we find a school which calls itself the historical school. There have been all kinds of schools in the since the time of the Greeks. There never was a historical school. This was something new. The first historical school that ever was. This historical school was a school of law, of folklore, and so on and so forth. This was not strictly speaking a philosophic school although there were some philosophers in the background. But as such it was certainly not a philosophic school. Let us consider this historical school for one moment. As you will find in every textbook and it is quite correct, the historical school was a conservative school. Incidentally, the most famous English representative of it is Henry who wrote in the sixties of the last century and who wrote some very nice books on ancient law. But this has now become absolutely a part of the routine and we forget who started it. The historical school had a political function. It emerged in reaction to the French Revolution, to the fabrication of constitutions, and legal codes. The historical school asserted not fabrication.

Fabrication is bad or impossible. The only thing is growth, slow growth. The historical school was in a way an heir to the most famous critic of the French Revolution, Edmund Burke. And it is very interesting to see that Edmund Burke did not speak of history. What Burke has to say about history is old traditional stuff and is of no interest. Burke's term was "prescription." Now "prescription" is a term of Roman law and from Roman private law. Prescription is that procedure by which you establish your property rights if contested. As far as we know it was never used in public law. The embarrassment is very interesting that Burke had to take a term of Roman private law in order to fulfill a need which later on was fulfilled apparently so simply by the word "history." Because "history" fulfills that lacuna which Burke tried to fulfill with the term "prescription." Incidentally, I think that one of the most urgent studies regarding Burke would really be a study of the term "prescription" as used by him. He does not use it as often as one would think. And go back in the literature. I mean I am not aware of its use by any earlier political writer, as distinguished from lawyer, scholar, and so on. This would be worth studying.

Now, "prescription," that was an entirely revolutionary principle. It was called "political" legitimately. The Holy Alliance - they gave it that very term. But the theoreticians of the Holy Alliance, at least in Germany, were the historical school. So, in other words, this historical school and the thing of history implied the opposition between historical and revolutionary. What is revolution from this point of view? Answer, the direct appeal from positive law to natural. The essential use of Robespierre or whoever else you take. Here the law applies. It is positive law. That doesn't have any intrinsic value to it and surely not if it contradicts natural law. The appeal from the positive law to the natural was the principle of the French Revolution. And the historical school tried to make this impossible for the future.

One can therefore say the historical consciousness, our very awareness of history, took the place of natural law. Now this is a very long process going throughout the 19th century, and it was perhaps fulfilled only at the end of the 19th century. But still, in principle, it was there from the very beginning. There is an essay by Traulch, a German historian on this subject, the substitution of historical consciousness for natural law translated by Annis Barker in his translation of Goethe. I don't remember now if that is a two volume work.

Student: It is available in paperback - Natural Law and the Theory of Society, the two volumes found in one. Pages 201 to 222.

Strauss: It would be of some use to read it. I mean it is by no means sufficient, but this point Traulch makes very clear, that what happened in the 19th century, at least in Germany, but went through Germany and affected the whole Western world, was the substitution of historical consciousness - awareness of history - for natural law.

Now this is, however, one great indication that one cannot understand this notion of history except in light of the concept of natural law. History is the successor to natural law. I mean

history now as a concept - "History." If "History" is the successor to natural law, one cannot understand this concept of "History" except in the light of natural law. Now in order to do that one cannot leave it at the French Revolution and its passionate and violent break with the past, that appeal from positive law to natural law and the reaction to it. Never must there be made any such appeal from the positive law to a higher law. That's a simple reaction to it. And that means that the best thing, of course, would simply be to say that there is no natural law, then you cannot appeal to it. This took some time, and that is natural. One formula which is very well known, not right of man - that is natural - but rights of Englishmen - that is historical. You know these things, of course.

In order to understand this one cannot look only at the situation as it appeared around 1800. One must go much further back. Within natural law itself an important change had taken place in the 17th century of which we will have to speak quite a bit in this seminar. I mention here only one point. The natural law doctrine as developed especially by Thomas Aquinas implied, of course, that natural law must be sufficiently promulgated in order to be a law. If there is a law, intrinsically a law, prescribing men what to do and what to forbear, and this law is not known to men, it cannot be a law. Now Thomas Aquinas guaranteed this sufficient promulgation by his concept of which we can loosely translate as conscience. In other words the natural law is sufficiently promulgated in the human conscience. And, of course, the Biblical account of the origin of man. You will see in a minute why this is crucial. By then, people began to question the Biblical account of the origin of man. This, of course, doesn't begin with Darwin, as some people believe. No creation, no conscious, strictly speaking. Now if no creation, no perfect beginnings because that is a key implication of the Biblical account. The beginnings are low which now has become really trivial since the days of Darwin.

The man who started from these low beginnings with greater success than anyone else was Hobbes. Hobbes, however, came into very great difficulty. Hobbes said men lived originally like beasts in the forest - isolated, in a terrible situation: war of everybody against everybody. The only way to get out of it is to unite, and they cannot unite except by contract, social contract. How can these savages, living in isolation and therefore having not even language of any kind, prophesy things so far ahead that the establishment of government would solve their problems and therefore conclude the social contract? Can men in the Hobbesian state of nature have developed reason so that they can conclude a contract? A very good question.

Hence the natural law is not sufficiently promulgated at the beginning, but only at the very advanced stages and the law has been long developed. Now this is already indicated by Locke, but much more clearly by Rousseau in the Discourse on the Origin of Inequality the so-called Second Discourse which, according to Rousseau himself, is a history of man. In order to lay a new basis for natural law as he understood it, Rousseau was compelled to write a history of law. The history shows the insufficient promulgation of natural law, and therewith, of course, that the natural law is not universally valid. How can it be valid for men who cannot possibly



understand it? Now this point, the insufficient promulgation of the law of nature, is obviously a key point in Vico. And Vico preceded Locke. I'm regardless puzzled that I think there is no real evidence that Rousseau was influenced by Vico. These things came somehow; they were, in a way, in the air. But surely the situation is very different in Vico than it is in Rousseau. And the simple proof of this is that in Rousseau's thought it begins with this history of man which is a kind of alleged refutation of traditional natural law. To repeat, because traditional natural law is based on the premise that natural law is insufficiently promulgated to man as man. And after having refuted that Rousseau set out to develop his own doctrine and this may be said to culminate in his book called The Social Contract,

In Vico there is no follow-up to a book called The Social Contract so Vico did something very different from Rousseau although they have something in common. Of course we must also not forget that Vico claims to be a Catholic, and he probably was. Whereas Rousseau claims to be a Protestant but in a very loose sense of the word, and I think one can say this safely. So Vico and Rousseau have this point in common. I mean I mention this point for one reason because Rousseau I knew somewhat and therefore I find my way there more easily than in Vico. Pardon me for this egocentricity.

Now, going back to what I said at the end and merely alluded to is that this Autobiography is much earlier than that edition of The New Science which we are going to read. It is therefore not as authoritative - from Vico's own point of view - as The New Science, at least the latest and final version which was published immediately after Vico's death, which we will read beginning a week from today.

Now, I would like to finish this point of Mr. \_\_\_\_\_. You point out very strongly that Vico is a Christian thinker, but you said also that he was very violent on Augustine and Bossuet. Why do you mention these two particular men?

Student: Well, I think first of all the reason I mentioned Augustine is because Vico refers to Augustine in his other work where he considers him to be what he calls Vives Augustinos. And Bossuet mainly because of that I consider to be a similar treatment - although he was somewhat more transcendent than Vico would be.

Strauss: Yes, but still, you found some minor difficulty because he is so silent about Bossuet and almost silent about Augustine? And then, specifically, you said, "Although he calls his own work a concern with civil theology." What did you mean by the "although?"

Student: inevitable

Strauss: I thought you meant something very simple. The term "civil theology" is best known from Augustine. Augustine gives a report about a doctrine of a pagan writer, Varro, a contemporary of Cicero. Incidentally, could you get for me your Varro edition? Thank you very much. You know Varro gives a summary of the doctrine allegedly of Stoic origin, according to which there are three theologies: the theology of the philosophers, the theology of the poets, and the theology of the legislators or civil theology. So civil theology is this older doctrine, a doctrine which does not claim to be true but which is necessary for the commonwealth. Now Vico speaks of civil theology as that with which he is concerned. You used the term synthesis of Vico. I think that although it is one of the least used terms, it is legitimate with regard to Vico. We will come back to that later.

Now one word in advance about this assertion that we understand only what we make. And since we do not make nature - natural things - we cannot, strictly speaking, understand them. We understand only what we make. Now let us try to understand this provisionally and perhaps superficially. What is the starting point? Because we said already a very simple thing, a very obvious thing. Not in the way in which Vico would like it, but in the primary meaning. For example, take a dog on the one hand and a chair on the other. Any carpenter who is not completely inarticulate can give you a perfect account of why he made the chair in this manner. Why he made it this way and not that, why he applied this color and not that, and so forth. But he knows the chair perfectly. There is no mystery whatever in it because he made it with his eyes open. Now in the case of the dog, infinite doubt.

because he did not make it. So the art, in other words - this is the starting point of the horizon: the distinction between art artifacts and natural. Artifacts are perfectly lucid - not for everyone, of course, but for those who made them, Good.

Now the distinction between nature and man is an entirely different distinction from that between nature and artifacts. How do we arrive at the distinction between nature and man? By starting from the distinction between nature and artifacts. Now there was this distinction in no way identical with that between natural and artifacts and that is the distinction between natural things and human things. Man is, of course, a natural being, and man lives differently than a dog. But human things, things made by man - and this does not necessarily mean artifacts proper; it may also mean institutions - human things has a rather wide meaning say in Xenophon, in Plato, in Aristotle where it means the good things, the just things, the noble things. They are also less mysterious than the natural things in themselves. But human things and man are two very different things. It is a disgraceful thing which I have observed in translations of, for example, Xenophon. When Xenophon speaks of human things they say human nature. I have observed this in Martin. This is, of course, a disgraceful misunderstanding. Human nature is infinitely different from the human things - things with which we have to deal, with which we are concerned. It's relatively simple.

Where does the distinction between nature and man come from? Now the distinction of which I spoke now, which deals with the natural things and the human things, was basically Aristotle. And the distinction between the theoretical sciences and the practical sciences is fundamentally the same. The practical sciences deal with the human things. The theoretical sciences deal with, let us say, nature - above all human nature. But where do we find the distinction between nature and man very visibly. I am not speaking now of any recent thing. Where do we find the distinction between - I mean do we find a doctrine of man as he intended it? In Aristotle you can say his psychology, his De Anima, gives a doctrine of man. But that is not quite correct because it deals with all living beings - souls, and not only the human ones but also. . . . But when you look at such a well-known book as the Summa Theologica, it is divided into books according to Christian doctrine. There is God and then the human, or man. And here I think is the most simple source for the notion of a doctrine of man and not merely of the human things.

Now this theory was taken over by Bacon especially and, one can say, Vice here simply follows the Christian tradition. But again following what you said, what everyone says, the distinction between nature and man is not identical with the distinction between nature and history with which we are concerned today. And in studying Bacon we can understand the transition from nature and man to nature and history better than we do today.

I was very favorable of you that you quickly dismissed the question of why we study Vice. But that it is not an important question, but we - after we have decided for reasons which are, we hope, good enough to study Vice we must simply say, "Now we will study Vice and forget about our reasons which might possibly lead us to distort Vice." Let us look at the tremendous doctrine.

Now here, in other words, for good or for bad reason we study this. There was one point which stuck out in my reading and you also saw this, I think, very clearly.

The first question, of course, is who are the men from whom he learned. Or to use a usual term, the influences. And one man is conspicuous from the outset. You said it in a way, but I wish you had said it more emphatically. From whom did he not learn? Because you can't learn anything from him. Aristotle. You can also say from the Bible because the Bible is not mentioned once. But Aristotle is mentioned and he had direction in his views, but - but. So Aristotle is out. That's the first point. Now let us see what this means in 1723 or 25 when he wrote. Since when was Aristotle out? Do you know something about that? Because let us never forget the fact that there is no one single philosopher who had had such long and continuous influence as Aristotle from his adoption in the 13th century onward. He lasted for centuries. No other man has remained such a key figure for such a long time. Now, then was he dethroned? Mr. \_\_\_\_\_?

Student: Inaudible

Strauss: H, m. This is kind of a fairy tale.

Student: Inaudible

Strauss: Yes, in this way the West came to know quite a few of the Greek writers, especially Plato, much better than before. That's quite true. But still, someone was ruling anyway and the ruler's overthrown took place a little bit later, in the 16th century, but still, very simply, Aristotle was still the master of the schools until the 17th century. When Hobbes wrote his Elements of Law in 1640 he still said that there is no man who has such a great authority in his parts - meaning England, of course - as Aristotle. 1640. And Hobbes couldn't be lightly taken. So this is this. But when was this - so in the 17th century. . . . can we give a certain date to this dethroning of Aristotle? This major revolution was not completed. It started in the 1670's but it was completed when?

Student: In 1686.

Strauss: G. 1. When Newton was able to give an account of heaven which was much truer and simpler than Aristotle's this brought it home to the meanest capacity that Aristotle was wrong.

(inaudible)

G. 1. Fine. So Aristotle is really out. Who took the place of Aristotle in Victor's thought, among the philosophers? We mentioned it.

Student: Plato.

Strauss: Plato. This is again something very typical. Plato taking over. And there are a variety of reasons. One very simple one is this: The new natural science was a mathematical natural science. Plato's natural science was also a mathematical natural science, although a very different one from that of Galileo and Newton. This is one very obvious one, and there are other reasons. For example, there is one very simple fact. When Hobbes was still

yung - and that meant in the case of this man of enormous longevity when he was fifty or younger - he was still an Aristotelian, also the greatest philosopher. After the revolution - when the Leviathan was just finished - the greatest of the ancient philosophers is Plato. This simple formula - though a superficial formula - but essential for the change which has taken place. And Hobbes made this clear. Plato means mathematics. Aristotle means that mathematics has a very subordinate place. Good.

So Plato is the one, and who is the other? The second great man? Because Plato is not enough for Vico. Vico is not a fanatic Platonist at all. He needs someone else.

Student: Tacitus.

Strauss: Tacitus. Now this is the synthesis. The synthesis of Plato and Tacitus. What does this mean? Now Tacitus was, of course, something very old when Vico wrote. When did Tacitus come to the fore? I disregard the date when his writing was done. Because then his copy disappeared and then he came to be recovered in the 16th century. Ya, but that doesn't mean anything because the humanists read all Latin books, and Vico was among them. But what does this mean from the much more specific point of view? In the late 16th to 17th centuries, say from 1560 to 1660 there existed a thing called Tacitism - Tacitism. And the most famous men are , a Dutch scholar of the 15th century and Spinoza. But there were many men whose names are now forgotten who were Tacitists. Now what does this mean? Tacitus was an historian of the Roman emperors and the Roman emperors - that was the first time that in the civilized world there was something called absolute monarchy and large states. Something very close to what would now be called terror - Tacitus gives beautiful accounts of how this was under Vitellius and and so on. And this was no longer pre- , popular. And this dissimulation was of major importance not only for subjects, but for the kings as well. And the emperors couldn't tell everyone - not even the Senate - least of all the Senate - what he really intended, and therefore they had to have what are called secrets of empire - . And in the 16th century there is a whole literature about secrets of empire. You know, how you can - these things which are now used under the heading manipulation. And this went with the name of Tacitus because Tacitus supplied the best and most detailed information and perfection of it. But Tacitus, of course, although he has this influence, was not the instigator of this kind of approach to political things. There was a great philosopher, as it were, behind the Tacitism and that was Machiavelli. Machiavelli had made his big fortune on the basis of Livy, and this is in itself quite important. But when one studies Machiavelli very carefully, one sees that for him he is much closer to Tacitus than he is to Livy. Livy was a patriotic Roman historian who could, of course, couldn't help telling from time to time, certain things about the seamy side of Roman politics, but in the main he presented it from a Roman gentleman's point of view. But Tacitus was ultimately more important to Machiavelli than Livy.

So let us then replace Tacitus by Machiavelli. Does he mention Machiavelli?

Student: Incalculable.

Strauss: I think he mentions him in The New Science. But I am not quite certain. But what about Plato and Machiavelli? Does a synthesis of Plato and Machiavelli - what could that mean? Anybody. Because you have to replace the meaning of the proper names by names for things - it becomes meaning. Because Plato may mean an infinite variety of things. We must know the key point in this content.

Student: Inaudible

Strauss: Machiavelli mentions specifically in the key chapter, that the earlier writers were concerned with how men ought to live and he will deal with men truly. Now Machiavelli, if we take this literally, simply rejects the all writers, and of whom Plato is surely the most famous. In fact it is somewhat more complicated. But let us - But he says, "We, no (inaudible) And the man who tries to make a synthesis of Plato and Machiavelli or Plato and Tacitus, is a man who wishes to take the best of the two worlds, of Plato's idealism and Machiavelli's realism. Now this was, of course, nothing new in Vice. Surely Bacon tried to do this thing. And therefore it is perfectly natural that the synthesis of Plato and Tacitus is affected somewhat greatly by Bacon.

Still there are other great men, apart from Plato, Tacitus - Grotius. Where does Grotius come in? What does Grotius deal with?

Student: Man and law?

Strauss: Well, law. Now Bacon was, of course, a very great lawyer as we all know. But, still, if we look at the body of his writing, there is very little about law and much more about all kinds of other questions. And Grotius is much more obviously a lawyer, dealing with all kinds of law - human, natural and divine.

Now let me say this of Plato and Tacitus. Plato - philosopher; Tacitus - historian. That Bacon tried to do in his thinking was to bring together philosophy and history in a way in which it was not brought together before. And in this respect Vice absolutely agrees with Bacon. But Vice makes a minor, or rather important correction of Bacon. When Bacon speaks of history he thinks chiefly, although not exclusively, of political history. But political history would give us (inaudible) But Bacon thinks . . . What does Vice mean by history? Political history?

Student: Inaudible.

Strauss: Sure, but much more law - the history of laws and institutions than political history proper. This is the great correction. That which will make possible The New Science and that synthesis of Plato and Tacitus will be the history of law and languages more than any other kind of history. This much is implied by the name to which he refers or refers.

Now let us consider the first part somewhat more closely. We shall not discuss the very long introduction of 107 pages, but it wouldn't do you any harm if you were to read it because there may be something very helpful in it. And we won't read over the Continuation

Stu Hunt : quoniam

Stuont : quon nqz

Now this book is an autobiography. And Vice we must say was a philosopher. And must we say about philosophers writing autobiographies? Let us first ask for this. Because autobiography is, of course, a form of history, a part of history - the history of this particular individual. And Vice the first philosopher to write an autobiography? No?

St Strauss: Yes, but insisting is a theologian. Philosophy strictly speaking, in the Christian sense, well is in a way an antithesis to philosophy. The philosophers narrowly understood - were there no philosophers at all east of Long View? Mr. \_\_\_\_\_?

JS' 200500C      200500C

ns : snoy : quc , nqS

But perhaps it means something special in the case of Vice. On page 113 in the second paragraph at the end he says - well, let us read the second half of this paragraph.

Student: We shall not have foreign what some Descartes craftily  
 designed . . . in order that the proper and natural causes of his  
 particular development as a man of letters may be known."

by Villaresa, page 200 and so on because this is not Vico himself and we will read only what Vico himself wrote. But again, no law against reading it. It might even be helpful to some extent.  
Mr. \_\_\_\_\_?

Student: Inaudible.

Strauss: Well, I limited myself - Grotius was a very famous biologist physical and practical. There is the old saying (Latin)

Yes surely he was, but for Vico - surely the Latin language is a very important language. But much more than political history proper . . .

Student: Inaudible.

Strauss: Yes, well you must also not forget that these names are symbols rather than completely lucid references.

Now this book is an autobiography. And Vico we must say was a philosopher. But must we say about philosophers writing autobiographies? Let us first consider this. Because autobiography is, of course, a form of history, a part of history - the history of this particular individual. Was Vico the first philosopher to write an autobiography? H?

Student: Augustine?

Strauss: Yes, but Augustine is a theologian. Philosophy strictly speaking. And the Confessions were, well is in a way an autobiography. But amongst philosophers narrowly understood - were there no philosophers at all aside from Vico? Mr. \_\_\_\_\_?

Student: Plato?

Strauss: Yes, the Seventh Letter would clearly be autobiographical. And in modern times, closer to Vico?

Student: Descartes?

Strauss: Descartes? The Discourse on Methods is a highly fictional autobiography containing some true facts of his life. And someone else.

Student: Rousseau

Strauss: Later. And Hobbes. Hobbes wrote both a prose and a verse account. Hobbes did that. So an autobiography as such is not an innovation of Vico among philosophers.

But perhaps it means something special in the case of Vico. On page 113 in the second paragraph at the end he says - well, let us read the second half of this paragraph.

Student: We shall not here feign what Rene Descartes craftily feigned . . . an order that the proper and natural causes of his particular development as a man of letters may be known.'



Strauss: In other words, he writes this emphatically as an historian and the purpose of the Autobiography is to explain the natural causes of his development as a man of letters. On page 111 - let us begin at the beginning. Read the whole first paragraph (Part a, 1725)

Student: Giambattista Vico was born in Naples in the year 1670 . . . take no pleasure in shallow witticisms or falsehoods."

Strauss: What did you learn from this in the light of the remarks that he wants to give the natural causes of his particular development? He is a man "of ingenuity and depth." How did this come?

Student: incredible

Strauss: Yes, but before he fell then he had already some character owing to the genes as we say today, the inheritance. Now, melancholy people of a melancholy temper - one must be a man of a melancholy temper in order to be a man "of ingenuity and depth." Also Aristotle said that. Where did he get that from? His mother. And the second, this mishap. It was because of this mischance that he grew up with a melancholy temper. This is important. So the physician was absolutely wrong that he would be an idiot because he became just the opposite. But both an inheritance and accident were crucial for the development of his mind. So he had this opportunity. Now this is only an indication and we would have to study it very carefully to see whether this account of his life in terms of natural causes is fulfilled.

Now surely he makes it perfectly clear that he was a boy of superior quality. And **was this superiority recognized by his environment?** The teachers must have seen that he was a particularly intelligent boy. Did they treat him in accordance with such a superiority? Some. But when it came to any official indication they treated him very badly.

Now the high point of his philosophic studies is Suarez. Suarez who is generally known as the codifier of scholastic philosophy. I know that this is not universally accepted. In the early 17th century. A man from whom Descartes learned and so on.

But this is only temporary. Surely he studied as a young man, but

Let us read page 114 bottom, 115 top.

Student: "Just prior in this time he betook himself to the Royal University of Studies, and his good genius led him into the class of Don Felice Aquidia, the excellent head lecturer on law."

Strauss: Let us stop here. You see, here again there is accident. Without any previous interest in law he just came to an interesting lecture on law and his interest was stimulated. So he had a certain training in metaphysics and then by accident he also stumbled into law. And this is the kind of thing I imagine which happens to many people. We do not know when we are ten years old what we will study later on. Accident decided. On page 115 bottom he mentions in passing that his father was a bookseller. You know, he didn't belong to the Neapolitan aristocracy by any means. He discusses this later - his social status. It is not

Now law. And we learn something from page 116, paragraph 2 - of two different ways in which one can study the law properly.

Student: "Now in going over the successive chapters of the civil law he found a great pleasure in two things."

Strauss: What is civil law? Roman law.

Student: "One was in seeing how . . . This attracted him to those medieval interpreters."

Strauss: Originally their term was "ancient" interpreters. The term was maybe here not as naturally used at that time as it is now. Go on.

Student: "When he later perceived and judged . . . This won him to the learned interpreters."

Strauss: In the original this was "erudite," i.e. they were not so much typical lawyers as they were concerned with language and so on. His?

Student: "When he later perceived and considered to be pure historians of the Roman civil law. . . especially from the usages of Roman jurisprudence, the most difficult part of which is knowing how to define the legal terms."

Strauss: So there are two radically different approaches to the laws. The first is philosophy of natural equity. And the other is history of Roman civil law. Two radically different things, but the synthesis which Vico is trying to achieve can be stated in these terms. The synthesis of philosophy of natural equity - you can see natural law - and history historically - consideration of one particular public law, Roman civil law.

Good. And on the next page we will find a reference work, On the One Principle of Universal Law. So the concern with metaphysics recedes in favor of the interest in law and the interest in law was somewhat criticized here already.

On page 119, the second paragraph.

Student: "So it happened that living in the castle for nine years . . . and every while gentle civil law in respect of history, and agree with the true doctrine of grace in respect of moral philosophy."

Strauss: You see here also that he begins to flee his study of **common** law, turning then to dogmatic theology. And going through that he returns again to legal studies. The chief concern, then, was law. Go on.

Student: "At the same time Lorenzo Valla, by his reprehension of the Roman jurists in point of Latin elegance, led him to cultivate the study of the Latin language, beginning with the works of Cicero."

Strauss: But you see here also this concern with the language has also to do with his concern for law.

Now he then begins to speak of another interest which has nothing to do with metaphysics or theology on the one hand or law on the other, and that is poetry. This is on the bottom of page 119 to the top of page 122. But if you would read that you would see that again it is a way from poetry to law and metaphysics. Again law is here in this section. Let us read only page 120 bottom (Part 2, 1725).

Student: "And in this study he noticed that Roman jurisprudence was an art of equity conveyed by innumerable specific precepts of natural law which the jurists had extracted from the reasons of the laws and the intentions of the legislators."

Strauss: Now the literal translation of what is said to be "natural law" is "natural right." Natural justice is justice to naturality. And then the next page, the second half of the page about the metaphysics of Plato to which he was led from Aristotle whom he rejected.

Student: "But the metaphysics of Plato leads to a metaphysical principle."

Strauss: This, I am sure, is an error in the original, at least in that edition of Vico which I use. That should be "physical" principle. It must be a mistake. I will look this up.

Student: "Which is the eternal idea, drawing out and creating matter from itself, like a seminal spirit that forms its own egg."

Strauss: There is \_\_\_\_\_, the dualist who has formed the one which is lower. Yes? (inaudible)

Student: "In conformity with this metaphysic he founds a moral philosophy on an ideal or architectonic virtue or justice. Consequently he devoted himself to meditating on ideal commonwealth, to which he gave, in his laws, an equally ideal justice."

Strauss: At this point again he is interested in metaphysics in Plato but he has an interest in Platonic politics which is, of course, closer to law than metaphysics as such. Yes. I think that you should read the rest of this paragraph.

Student: "So that from the time Vico felt himself dissatisfied with the metaphysic of Aristotle. . . This was the ideal republic that Plato should have contemplated as a consequence of his metaphysic; but he was shut off from it by ignorance of the fall of the first man."

Strauss: That was discussed further on. Now how do we have to understand that? By the way this word "ideal" is, of course, the old Platonic term, but "ideal" the actual word was coined I believe in the 17th century by \_\_\_\_\_. In Italian it is \_\_\_\_\_. So the actual word "ideal" doesn't exist before, but in Vico's time it is history. So one can, of course, then say that that Plato presents in the Republic is an ideal commonwealth. But this ideal commonwealth of Plato is very different

from Vico's ideal commonwealth because Vico's ideal commonwealth will be a result of various conditions of man. Whereas in Plato it is the political issue. This is, of course, very important. And according to Vico's interpretation the difference between him and Plato is due to the fact that Plato was ignorant of the fall of the first man. But can we understand that difference also independently of Vico's Christian faith? Because, after all, his doctrine of the ideal commonwealth is not meant to be a Christian doctrine in itself, but is a purely philosophic doctrine. What would be the non-Christian criticism of the doctrine of the fall of man?

Student: inaudible

Strauss: Yes, but to what extent does the age of commerce-the Golden Age play a role in that?

Student: inaudible

Strauss: So Plato presupposes, let us say, perfect human beings. Vico presupposes very imperfect human beings. Where does the body stand regarding each person? Perfect or imperfect? Of course man was created perfect, but there was the fall. Now Vico deals in his work only with men, with the gentiles, i.e. with "fallen" men, corrupt men. It is to a great extent the Hobbian or Epicurean premise, externally in agreement with the Biblical view.

At any rate, from the very beginning, Vico's chief interest is in law, both natural and living and human, and in society and this is a sufficient reason why he was not interested in the Stoics and the . . . I think this is frequently asserted up to the present day, that the stoics and the . . . were so-called individualists, i.e. not concerned with society and the good order of society, but only with the well-being of the individual. But what is this with a view to historically? Just to have some distance from Vico. Yes?

Student: inaudible

Strauss: Yes. It is complicated. One can understand that men have been prejudiced that Stoics were so-called individualists, but there is also much evidence to the contrary. It is true only with regard to the . . . who were simply disinterested in matters political.

Student: inaudible

Strauss: Well in addition one knows a bit about the original Stoics. . . is very late - 17th century A.D. But the early Stoics in the 4th century and 3rd century, one knows a bit about them and they have a political doctrine. Whether it is a good one is another matter, but they are surely interested in politics. But this only in passing.

Then there is another point which I cannot discuss thoroughly but which must be of some interest. He is somewhat distrustful of algebra. Let us read page 124, bottom (part A, 1725).

Student: "It is rather paradoxical in that it teaches youth the elements of the sciences of magnitudes by the algebraic method . . . which in both (at least the capitals) are regular geometric lines, - were reduced by the Arabs to ten minute ciphers."

Strauss: Now he deals for the first time with numbers. Algebra was the new science developed in the 17th century, the new mathematics. This is simply rejected by Vico. He notes it in passing. It is most important for us to see here that he never really studied mathematics. And when he did he thought the only advantage of it was to learn how geometers proceed in their reasoning - so that if he ever had occasion to reason in that manner he would know how. That's all.

Now on page 126, 7 lines from the end.

Student: "And though Epicurus had no knowledge even of geometry, yet, by a well-ordered deduction, he built on his mechanical physics a metaphysics entirely sensualistic just like that of John Locke, and a hedonistic morality suitable for men who are to live in solitude, as indeed he enjoined upon all his disciples."

Strauss: Yes, this is the part dealing with Locke. He specifically states that Locke is a sensualist, meaning a man who traces all knowledge to sense perception. That's Locke. But then there is another thing, that is morality of a second kind, hedonistic morality. So has Locke, but what he alludes to is a key difference between Locke and Epicurus. They had both a hedonistic morality, but this he presents: hedonistic morality as "suitable for men who are to live in solitude, as indeed he" - Epicurus - "enjoined upon all his disciples." Yes, what did Locke do with that? Now this point is very important. Locke and Epicurus agree regarding a hedonistic morality. But what's the difference? Vico doesn't say in his own words, but he makes it quite clear.

Student: Incredible

Strauss: Sure. Therefore one could say provisionally that the modern Epicureans, like Locke, are political Epicureans. Political, whereas the old ones were non-political, even anti-political. And that is, I think, quite true. The old Epicureans were, on the whole, simply apolitical men. Modern Epicureans in modern days were most emphatically political. Think of polis understood today by a liberal - I mean in the crude language of the daily papers - let us accept this as a paradise on earth meaning let us take the maximum of body enjoyment. Hedonism, but possible only as a social enterprise. Whereas the older Epicureans simply said, "We don't want comfort because solitude is much more comfortable than any comfort which can be obtained by social enterprise." That is important and we should be cognizant of that.

Student: Those who ignore the social aspect of Epicureanism - there is a whole tradition before of calling materialists "Epicureans." Whether they were Epicureans or not whenever people talked about materialists they used that term.

Strauss: Yes, but I think the older ones were socially indifferent. They wanted to be left alone, to live in their gardens. Gardens didn't mean elaborate establishments that cost a lot of money, but . . .

Student: Am I pushing it to hard if I say that in order to have gardens I would have to have (incredible)

Strauss: In a way, yes, and this is perhaps the most obvious defect of Epicureanism in that it did not sufficiently reflect on the necessity of colleagues, to put it on the lowest level. And that was Hobbes' point. The first thing you need are policemen and that means a state. That you can say. But I suppose they simply said, "Well, there is the other aspect of the existence of police because they want to have their property protected and it will be beneficial to us." The position is nicely and clearly discussed in a number - Memorabilia 2:1. That is his point. The hedonist says, "I want to be a stranger here without any citizen's obligations in any way." And then they would try to find a job. And, well, they haven't thought about that. So I would say that a political hedonism is a modern phenomenon and the name for that - the very dignified name - you have heard it "and times - is economics. Because economics is primarily the production of goods - the body is involved. And therefore there was no political economy until quite recently because typically they were hedonists and therefore non-political, non-social, or they were utilitarians." But political economy required both aspects. Pleasure plus affect. One could say with some justice that the first man who extended such a thesis of political hedonism was Thomas Moore in the Utopia. But this would not be very helpful. But at first glance one could say that. First Mr. \_\_\_\_\_.

Student: Could not the Sophists in some sense be considered political too?

Strauss: Because you know Sophism is very difficult. The notion came almost exclusively from Plato and, to some extent, from Aristotle, i.e. from people opposed to them. Now it depends very much what trust you have in Plato's and Aristotle's reasoning. I have a very high opinion of them, so I believe in it. But many scholars say that Plato and Aristotle had many kind of partisan fantasies against them, and then they tried to put together their positions. If one takes Aristotle's view, one arrives at the conclusion that the Sophists, properly discussed - were non-political men, but they had to live and they tried to make a living by teaching other people - non-Sophists, ordinary citizens - and simple things men needed to live, i.e. the art of speaking. And this art of speaking is, of course, primarily a political art. In this invalid way they became concerned with politics, but not strictly speaking. Aristotle says very clearly that the Sophists are people who reduce political themes to rhetoric, i.e. they do not treat political things properly. And I believe that is correct. That they see about politics to some extent is true, but that doesn't make them political thinkers proper. Yet I will say that a political thinker is a man who is public spirited. Does this make sense? If you regard the public affairs only as a kind of nuisance and you develop perhaps the technique of evading them - and this is what the Sophists had done - that doesn't make them political thinkers. Plato and Aristotle and the Stoics, too, they were public spirited. I.S?

Student: But what happened to the men who studied with the Sophists?

Strauss: But these were citizens, Athenian citizens who needed tools and they took them where they could get them - Are you in the course on the Gorgias?

Student: Yes.

Strauss: Well Callicles is such a man. Callicles is not a Sophist. He despised the Sophists. He is an Athenian general. But he has to learn to speak, and he can learn it much better if he goes to a paid teacher where he can ask all kinds of questions, than to merely talk to an older gentleman who is a reputed orator, say like Pericles. Pericles wouldn't have time to tell him and he would also have other reasons for not telling him why he is such a terrific orator as he is.

Lecture III

Vico: Autobiography, October 7, 1963.

Now, Mr. \_\_\_\_\_, you begin your paper very clearly and the first few pages are generally interesting. I will come back to the beginning of your paper. It was very attractive to me because it was clearly stated on specific evidence from the Autobiography. The more you proceeded the more you lost this relying on evidence. I know you referred here and there but. . .

(inaudible)

Now you come into great difficulties in the empirical pages of your paper and the very broad critical attacks. Now when you say that Vico is anti-philosophic I believe I understand what you mean by that, but it is a very (inaudible), because it implies, as you know, a denial of the philosophic character of all, or almost all, of modern philosophy. This is, I don't say absurd, but (inaudible)

Vico understands by nature the nationality, the birth, the origin. And nature should also mean the development. I am fairly sure that Vico doesn't mean by natura something else.

This is exactly what Hobbes talked about. You know, and Locke. The state of nature, the early things. This is the original state. The imperfect original state. So of course, then, that is the question. This is not a peculiarity of Vico. By the same pact you treat also Hobbes and Locke and so on. Good.

Now then you have a point which is peculiar to Vico and which is surely not pertinent: the knowledge of the particular, philology. To what extent does Vico demand knowledge of every thing. Because this is indeed not possible - it is infinite. But to what extent does he do that? But even if one is more confident that philosophers in general were, why? I mean with a view to what does he study all these little things, coins and what have you? Why did he do that? In order to ascend from them on a broad and clinical basis to what he calls the eternal law. By nature. And this of course is meant to be a kind of natural law in the sense of modern science.

So really natural is not just what is from the world, and not limited to the origins but precisely the way from the beginning to the end of which you know. This is the natural process. And this he wants to establish by this paper. So since you have come somewhat far but this is not to deny that, well, yes. Now when you say that the concern - his anti-philosophic character of his attack on natural rights, because this becomes identical with the question of the origin. There is some truth in that. There is no question. But the question of origin is not so unimportant, so unphilosophic as you portrayed it. I believe when we turn to certain key passages in the work itself you will find an amazing similarity between The Laws, because the Republic and especially this half of the Republic which is considered (inaudible) So these things all need considerable qualification to begin with.

I do not deny, I assert, that your paper was what they call brilliant. But that is a very dangerous concept. In other words, you have imagination. You see things which many people would not see, but



also sometimes one sees these things by what they call extra sensory perception. But one cannot use. . .

Student: inaudible

Strauss: Yes, I know. That's the reason I am very pleased with your paper, but I have also to prevent misunderstanding on the part especially of the new students. I have also to use a certain police function.

But this doctrine of providence. It looks to you like a Platonic coloring of an intrinsically Lucretian doctrine. I believe here you are right in part, but it would need some adding. And this is, of course, the objection which I would raise generally. You have not studied The New Science yet. But you have looked at it. Well, that is good. You have looked at it. This is a part of the specification because this book is, of course, insufficient to give a notion of his doctrine.

Now I will come back to what I have to say about the first part. And this part persuaded me very much. I confess that I read the Autobiography - but that doesn't mean very much. Because scholars have been interested in the most uninteresting things. You know you have really to (inaudible) most of the time. There is no doubt about that.

But still I want to know what happened there. When I read Descartes' Discourse on Methods, it is a sheer joy to read it, even at the first reading and still more at the later readings. It gives the impression of a novel - that was my impression. But it can be somewhat pecky, you know, always looking up to the bigshots - the counts and princes, and what have you, and immensely pleased that he is not given better treatment. And this is, of course, not a pleasant study. And there are other things of this kind. And you, then, feel and you may very well be right that this is in fact a very crude form in order to make clear these facts - the facts of the situation. I think that it is profoundly ironic. The way in which he stated these things about the empty tomb and so forth are truly very perverse you could say. And we should perhaps go into them later on because if Vico is capable of this kind of thing this might considerably affect the entire work. That is surely very, very interesting.

Now I would like to before we turn - we should consider these passages. But first you said something about the content of this kind of wording. Now very early he gives an account of his work up to 1731 and, of course, the work on The New Science was not finished until 1744, still later. Now what do we learn about our reading, about the higher working of The New Science from the Autobiography? Do you understand this question? Good. Vico has written a variety of books and he speaks of all of them up to that time. And then he wrote a first version of The New Science and then other versions. There was a final version which was to be finished shortly before his death, and came out only shortly after his death. And it is this final version which we are going to study.

Now that I have seen of the literature, and that is not much, but if I have a certain hunch I would say I can generalize from these very limited things. What people do is this. Whenever they find

a difficulty in the final version, they turn to an earlier version or an earlier writing, i.e. they look at the final version in the light of earlier writings. If one looks at Vico on the basis of his earlier writings, that's the first offense. Mr. \_\_\_\_\_.

Student: inaudible

Strauss: That was a remark made in an earlier book, but when he was no longer very young, The Universal Law which was written, when? In 1714? That work is constantly used by Croce and others and in particular, if I remember correctly, there were three items. At any rate I think that it became the most mature and right proof of his thought in this second version of The New Science.

Student: inaudible

Strauss: He suggested it as insufficient. That it is, in fact, not an edition, has simplified matters for later scholars greatly. But even if it existed it wouldn't have been authoritative.

Student: inaudible

Strauss: Yes, but I believe the evidence is - I forgot the method used, but the impression that I got is that we are acting wisely in studying the second version in its own light. Now what one would have to do, needless to say, if we had time or if we were to conduct a serious study on Vico - it would take, of course, five or ten years - then we would have to read, of course, the whole works of Vico to get some idea of his development. But we must, then, study each of these versions by itself and not get a kind of artificial mixture of the various writings or versions, which mixture is of no authority whatever. Because it is our work. Well, let me try to make this more clear. (explanation on the blackboard) Here is the last version and here, let us say, is The Universal Law. Here are some doctrines. These two let us say, are found in The Universal Law. But here in this context, perhaps this identical doctrine has a very different meaning in The Universal Law - you know, in the earlier - than it has in this new version. So the ideal task would be to interpret Vico's thoughts in each stage by itself and then to see the result. Since we are not Vicoan scholars and we cannot devote more than a poor eight weeks to the study of this 600 page book, we will strictly restrict ourselves to that (to the second version) and see whether it doesn't make sense in itself.

There is a commentary on this second version by an Italian Vico scholar, Nicolini. Two volumes - unfortunately I have taken them out. One of the few privileges which teachers have. But the usefulness of the commentary in my opinion is limited, as far as I can see, to that that it gives you all the references to quoted authors. So when Vico says \_\_\_\_\_ you go to Nicolini and he can tell you 419 and this is, of course, great relief for the man who can't read the whole \_\_\_\_\_ in order to find the reference. But other passages are not so hard so you should not be too angry with me. . . .

Let us then turn to our work. Yes, Mr. \_\_\_\_\_. But there was someone else. Mr. \_\_\_\_\_, you wanted to say something.

Student: inaudible.

Strauss: Well in these cases, of course, with some of these things which he regards as terribly important - the proof that the law of the twelve tables was not brought from Athens as legend has it, but was truly of generally Roman origin. Alright, if he doesn't give that proof in the New Science - I do not know whether he does - and he says he has given the proof in an earlier book, naturally you will read that. That goes without saying.

But let me take a very different case. Hobbes. Now in the case of Hobbes we have three versions of the same teaching, the Elements of Law and the Leviathan. And Hobbes does not tell us anything about the authority of each of these. Now in the case of the Leviathan we have in addition the original English version and the Latin version of Hobbes himself which differs in some different points in the original. Here we have no statement of the author, "This is my final version. This is really the best one." Not at all. And from studies of the works in crucial points the De Cive is far better and clearer than the Leviathan. Although the Leviathan is, of course, most enjoyable reading because it is in English, and Hobbes' Latin, while good, is not as good as his English. But, on the other hand, in The Elements of Law which has, perhaps, least authority because it was not published properly by Hobbes himself. It appeared in only a garbled edition. The Leviathan was generally published only in 1928. So it has very little authority. But there are some parts there which surpass in clarity and color anything you will find in the Leviathan or the De Cive. But here, as I say, we have a very different story because there was no authoritative declaration as we have here. It's an entirely different procedure. But there are, of course, some earlier writings of Hobbes, written about twenty years earlier - about when the first version of The Elements of Law was written. No one would regard this as evidence of the nature of Hobbes as say on the authority of the Leviathan. Of course not. So I do not know at the moment any other case because the case of Plato is much more quantitative. There we also have different versions and the question of the authority of the different writings arises, but I believe that that case is entirely different. Mr. \_\_\_\_\_?

Students: inaudible.

Strauss: Well, would you believe that it may not be an old professor but maybe a young instructor giving a lecture somewhere on this campus and that the president of this university would come in ten minutes later would he not do just that?

Students: inaudible

Strauss: In other words, no - it wouldn't do. I mean he would say it simply out of politeness. What would you say more? I mean he couldn't possibly do that also because of the rest of the audience. He couldn't simply and literally have repeated. It would have been an imposition on the others. Perhaps he said the same thing in different words. That is not a sufficient statement. He will later on, if we have the time, discuss the passages. Mr. \_\_\_\_\_?

Student: inaudible

Strauss: I see. Well, thank you.

Let us first turn to the other passages and then turn to the passages mentioned by Mr. \_\_\_\_\_. I remind you of the chief result of our discussion of the first part. What Vico says about the simple statement which if one has a certain information was supplied by Vico, but which is very easy to get by, gives one a good picture - a provisional picture - of what he's aiming at. He studied Plato who taught men how to live, how one ought to live; Tacitus who shows how men do live and we replace Tacitus immediately by Machiavelli. Not that Tacitus is identical with Machiavelli, but this is the function of Tacitus. He is to represent Machiavelli. And then the synthesis - Bacon. And this is simply historically correct. Bacon tries to produce a new teaching of how societies ought to live, although if you hear that Bacon wrote an imitation of Plato's utopia it is no lie. Now Atlantis - Plato had written the first Atlantis. But the difference between Vico and Bacon is tremendous because Bacon is, after all, the \_\_\_\_\_, the trumpeter of the new sciences, of the new natural sciences which should bring about a great technological development contributing to a higher standard of living and so on and so on, a phenomenon which we know now from the end was predicted or demanded at the beginning.

In Vico there is no such kind of this kind of statement. His synthesis is of a different nature because his theme is, above all, law. And this is in the face of the fact that the force of what he is - Hugo Grotius. And this is a very good summary straight from Vico's mouth which is the first information about what he is going to say.

Now there were a few points in last time's assignment that we should go over. Mr. \_\_\_\_\_?

Student: Inaudible.

Strauss: All, there is a statement on Grotius which you should read which we have not discussed on page 150 bottom to 155. (Part A, 17-9)

Student: "While preparing to write this life Vico found himself obliged to read Hugo Grotius On the Law of War and Peace."

Strauss: Excuse me, is not the title \_\_\_\_\_, that is On the Right of Peace and War? I'm almost sure. No, because he changed the order. Grotius was much too peace-loving to put war first. But I do not know, although I'm almost sure. Good. Go on.

Student: "And here he found a fourth author to add to the three he had set before himself. . . . He set out to write them less in correction of Grotius than of Gronovius's notes on him, which had been added more to please free governments than to give justice its due."

Strauss: In other words, Grotius was much more complacent (inaudible) than Vico. By the way, that is a very good commentator to know - Gronovius. Go on.

Student: "Vico had covered the first book and half of the second when he abandoned the task, reflecting that it was not fitting for a man of Catholic faith to adorn with notes the work of a heretical author."

Strauss: Yes, this is one of the funny parts because he has given high praise to two Protestant authors - Bacon and Grotius.

Is this on your list of funny things? It should be on it.

Student: inaudible

Strauss: No, really. I mean one has to be aware of whether a writer is capable of this kind of thing or not. Because there may be difficulties which can be sought by the course of the nature of his study. Yes, now let me see if there is anything more which would be . . . yes. Here he quotes at the end of A, page 165, a statement of a review of his Principles of Universal Law by a French scholar Jean Le Clerc. This is perhaps only the last quarter on page 165.

Student: "There is a continuous mingling of philosophical, juridical and philological matters. . . From these we gather that the author is regarded as an expert in metaphysics, law and philology, and his work as original and full of important discoveries."

Strauss: Now this is, of course, in itself, a wholly external statement that he combined these three sciences. The question would naturally be, "How does he combine them and what is the meaning of them?" And this we will find out when we turn to The New Science.

The beginning of the next part is also interesting because it brings up the question of the Autobiography as a whole. As a history, as giving the causes of why Vico became the man he did become. Did you find it? On the same page.

Student: "That Vico was born for the glory of his native city and therefore of Italy (since, being born there and not in Morocco, he became a scholar)"

Strauss: Undeveloped nations. Today he would not be permitted to write that.

Student: ". . . is evidenced by nothing so much as by this: that after this blow of adverse fortune, which would have made another henceforth renounce all learning if not repent of having ever cultivated it, he did not even suspend his labors on other works."

Strauss: We will stop here. What does this tell us about the cause of why he became what he did become. By the reference that he was born for the glory of his native city, and therefore of Italy. He was born not only for that but also to some extent by that, as he makes clear by reference to Morocco. Without Italy, maybe, no Vico. I mean a man of the same gifts born at the same time in Morocco would not develop in the same way. Of course this is not peculiar to Morocco. A few centuries before, not in Morocco, but in the neighborhood of Morocco - in Tunisia or thereabouts - Ibn Khaldun was born who is, in the general literature, compared to Vico. So this is, of course, Morocco at that time when it was rather low.

But what about this thought? Is this a part of a causal explanation of Vico's development? Later, early eighteenth century. And in every modern book of history I'm sure you will find the fact duly emphasized. What about the character of such explanation? Is

this a novelty in Vico? The classic knowledge on this subject is in the most obvious place in political philosophy. At the beginning of Plato's Republic. No one can have missed that. Do you know the story?

Student: The story of a man who lived on a very small island - his name was \_\_\_\_\_. And he said that if he had been born in Athens he would have been famous or great. But he said, "It was my misfortune to be born on this island." He said, "Surely if I had been born on your island I would have been famous."

Strauss: Yes, that's the story. That was obvious. But among the conditions making it possible for human development, of course the country or city in which the man is born is of crucial importance. There is nothing new in that and it is in a way a cause, although by no means a sufficient cause. Because otherwise all Neapolitans of Vico's generation would have to be very great minds which even Vico does not say. Unusually modest. And modesty is not always present as you will see.

Now, then, what is that real proof of his - of the immediate future? Here he "made two sizeable volumes in quarto." Find it?

Student: "In the first part he set out to find the principles of the natural law of the peoples within those of the humanity of the nations . . . the Greeks, to whom we owe all we know of gentile antiquity."

Strauss: That is perfectly right. This is in the earliest version of The New Science. Now what is the term? Here we have "natural law" which is in Italian, of course, \_\_\_\_\_, and which I would translate "natural rights" to keep the terms clear. This is a very rough indication of his next work. Then he says something about a somewhat later version of The New Science in the next paragraph. Will you begin - "In this work . . ."

Student: "In this work he finally discovers in its full extent that principle which in his previous works he had as yet understood only in a confused and indistinct way."

Strauss: Now this is one of the passages which makes it absolutely **clear** that his writings prior to 1725 have very little authority compared to those afterwards. Please continue.

Student: "For he now recognizes an indispensable and even human necessity to seek the first origins of this science in the beginnings of sacred history."

Strauss: "Even human" - he means even disregarding all divine necessity - even all the philosophers. In other words, as mere philosophers one is compelled to seek the first origins of this science. But what of this science? That's of course a very new expression because the first origins of this science are to be found at the time of the life of Vico. The first origins with which this science is concerned. Mr. \_\_\_\_\_?

Student: Inaudible

Strauss: Yes, but let us see what kind of history.

... correcting a quantity of common errors which the ablest critics have passed over."

Strauss: Now let me try to state that a bit more clearly. Because of the needs of critical art, new critical art, art and not method. That is obviously here because if the truth about the origins has to be found from the available material - be it books or coins or perhaps even diggings - then you have, of course, need of a critical art in order to date these things properly and so on and so on. But he starts from the flood and that is very important because according to Biblical doctrine all men, with the exception of one family, were destroyed in the flood so that all men now living are descendants not only from Adam, but in particular from Noah, the lone survivor of the flood.

Now there comes one very main passage, in a way the most important passage from here until page 173.

Student: inaudible comment regarding middle of page 172 (Part B, 1725, 1726)

Strauss: That is the point. And if they are monarchs proper. I mean like the monarchs of the eighteenth century then also they would be "pro." This is the point. There must be something pre-Russian. Of course the status of fraud and force is somewhat different. Force is a custom, of course of the very bestial beings. We will find that out when we turn to the second reading, to The New Science.

Student: inaudible

Strauss: Yes, but it comes out a bit more clearly on page 172. Now he gives here the position which we will hear again when we read The New Science and the three ages: the age of the gods, the age of the heroes and the age of human beings, and three corresponding languages, how does he call them? Hieroglyphic, populous and common - non-metaphoric. We will leave that here. Now here he speaks of the laws - on page 172, line 4 from the top.

Student: "The first law was divine, under the government of the true God among the Hebrews and of various false gods among the gentiles."

Strauss: Now what does he say in this sentence in the light of Biblical notion? "Of the true God among the Hebrews" - that is, of course, not good. But "the various false gods among the gentiles. Is this an orthodox expression? Yes, it is, but why? There are passages in the Bible in which the gods of the pagans are regarded as non-existent.

Student: inaudible

Strauss: Yes, but for example Augustine - The City of God - there there are demons in it. So there is this - a kind of inferior heaven.

(inaudible)

Student: "The second was heroic, or peculiar to the heroes who stood midway between gods and men. The third was human, or peculiar to human nature as fully developed and recognized as alike in all men."

Strauss: In other words, the two earlier laws were based on the premise of the inequality of men. The gods are, of course, unequal to man, but the heroes also. Or in simple historical terms, the old, earlier commonwealth was aristocratic according to Vico. When did this aristocratic government the knowledge, the humanity of the plebians? And the third, the equality of all men as men is recognized. All men as men not necessarily equal in all their rights, but he cannot be treated as a plebian. That is the point. Yes?

Student: "Not until this 1st law already holds sway is it possible for philosophers to arise among the nations and perfect it by reasoning from the maxims of an eternal justice."

Strauss: "Possible" he says. It is by no means necessary that philosophers should arise. But they may arise when a certain rationality of the society has been achieved by the fact that there are now human laws - law known to be of human origin. Vico will trace this very neatly in the Roman history (inaudible) Only then may philosophers arise. And now he comes to the fundamental error of all previous natural law teaching.

Student. "On this last point Grotius, Selden and Pufendorf have erred together."

Strauss: He mentions these three men why? During the seventeenth century they were the great men. Pufendorf is already post-Hobbes. Grotius and Selden are pre-Hobbes. This difference between pre- and post-Hobbesian is of no immediate concern to Vico or I believe he would have mentioned it. What about the (inaudible)

Student: (inaudible)

Strauss: (inaudible) It is quoted by Montesquieu. He surely was not the same as these two. He does not pretend to be. And secondly, if I am not mistaken - when was this written? in 1728? if you look after that there is , I remember the name, but Grotius appeared in 1625, Selden in 1640 under Law of the and Pufendorf I believe in the '70's.

Student: (inaudible)

Strauss: Mr. \_\_\_\_\_, would you mind bringing up your question in a few minutes? Because we must make this very important point. Good.

Student: "For lack of a critical method applicable to the founders of the nation, they believed them to be wise in esoteric wisdom . . ."

Strauss: That should actually be "recondite" wisdom.

Student: " . . . wisdom and did not see that for the gentiles . . ."



Strauss: In contradistinction to the Jews. Go on.

Student: "providence was the divine teacher of a common wisdom . . . a people chosen by God for the preservation of his true cult when it was lost by all the other nations."

Strauss: Now let me stop here. I think he means, of course, the Jews. The New Science disregards the Jewish law as a matter of principle because it is concerned with the natural rights of the gentiles. That, then, is the fundamental error of Grotius, Selden, and Pufendorf? To assume that the natural rights of the gentiles can have been rational. That's the key point. Now once you see that this is the key point - the limitation Vico imputes to these authors - Grotius, Selden and Pufendorf - it, of course, has another meaning. He (inaudible) about the public natural. Because surely Grotius and Selden and in a way also Pufendorf, of course agree to the premise that the natural law is principally the law of reason. And the natural right of the nation is not the rational, it is not the natural right of the philosopher. That is the point. Then what can it be? It must be something terribly primitive. This much is clear. Because it was identical with the customs of the early tribes. For instance, it was whatever Roman patricians regarded as right and proper to cover foreigners and their own plebians. So, in other words, there cannot be legitimate marriage among plebians. This is only concubinage. The only people who can marry properly are Greek nobles or Roman nobles or whatever. (inaudible) That is only one example.

So what is the innovation? The natural right. Let me make this as clear as I possibly can. A natural right is a right which does not require divine revelation for its promulgation. Hence, its principles must be known as well to gentiles as to Christians and Jews. Some allowance may be made for

(inaudible) but fundamentally that is true. So we investigate the natural rights of the gentiles. But if it is to be natural it must be acceptable at least in principle to the gentiles at any time after the flood. Because that is the only period to which you can conceivably go back by any speculation. And Vico says that when you do that you come to the conclusion that there was absolutely nothing that depends upon man's morality which would apply to all men. What they needed was a kind of intra-tribal morality strictly limited to the ruling class - to the patricians or whatever. That is of course related to the question with which we were concerned in the introductory presentation, the problem which we find implied in Hobbes and Locke, and clearly stated by Rousseau in The Discourse on the Origin of Inequality. What the natural law in its traditional sense - and, of course, Vico knew that that was its basis in the pure form - what is properly promulgated at all times. In the case of Locke people usually limit themselves to reading and very heavily depending on The Second Treatise on Government. They don't read the first treatise properly and they don't read the Essay Concerning Human Understanding. And there is a discussion in the Essay Concerning Human Understanding regarding the nonexistence of any innate principles - theoretical or practical. But this particular point is stated by Vico more powerfully than by these other men. Good. Now let us read the end of this passage.

Student: "The lack of this critical method had likewise earlier misled the learned interpreters of the Roman law . . . This precluded their treating it in the light of its own sects, which were those of the times, as the Roman jurists themselves expressly claim to have done."

Strauss: In other words, the Roman interpreters of the Roman laws from the time, say, of Augustus on - they were of course of philosophers, reading the old Roman laws from the early times in the light of the authors. They couldn't understand the meaning of these ancient laws because they assumed that human nature hadn't changed and that they were 'rational' men, although they were still very close to the bestial condition. And now finish this.

Student: "By this work, to the glory of the Catholic religion . . . Vico has thereby procured for our Italy the advantage of not envying Protestant Holland, England or Germany their three princes of this science."

Strauss: Namely Grotius, Selden and Pufendorf. So, in other words, it is all fine, there cannot be any conflict between his people and the Protestant people because Vico has refuted these heretical men. But what has not become clear to Vico is that what he refuted was at the same time the teaching of Augustine in The City of God. Now there are still more passages. Mr. \_\_\_\_\_?

Student: Inaudible

Strauss: Yes, but what you must understand is can there really be a monarchy? I mean even properly a monarchy. Monarchists say that Hobbes also was in favor of monarchy. But if the monarchy has this truth, in the negation of power ultimately by the democratically constituted people, then it is, of course, fundamentally a democratic monarchy, although in practice it may not show any  
(inaudible)

Student: Inaudible

Strauss: That has nothing to do with it because that is a doctrine in the first place to the gentiles. The difficulty is this: we have to create  
(inaudible)  
And this is all nations: Phoenicians, Greeks, Romans and so on.

(inaudible)

Were there any new nations in fact because they could have arisen in the 16th and 17th centuries without Vico knowing of them. But were there any new nations supposing Vico could have known?

Student: Inaudible

Strauss: Good. And I don't remember what he says about them - not very much. But were there any other new nations? After the ancient Greeks, Romans, and so on so forth  
(inaudible)

This creates a difficulty because were these gentile nations? In their origin of course, but surely not afterwards. And this is the most obvious difficulty of Vico's thesis. On the one hand is the church  
(inaudible) on the other hand, most of

them were gentiles.

Lecture III, p. 12

(inaudible)

We cannot exclude the possibility that Vico was radically confused because we know from our own experience that we are radically confused. That does not mean very much. But it may also be that he was not. But we cannot know.

Lecture IV

Vico: The New Science, October 9, 1963

Let me first make one statement with which you may agree. We have discussed the Autobiography. The Autobiography was completed about thirteen years before this book. And this is the final statement. Let us forget about the Autobiography. Let us store it here and not dwell on it, drawing on it in case of necessity. That's the one thing. And then there is the other thing which I must mention although we cannot possibly discuss it. I have no idea about it, but it is surely a very trivial question. Mr. \_\_\_\_\_ comment deals with Vico's explanation of \_\_\_\_\_ What is the relation of this explanation to Kant? Is every item in the \_\_\_\_\_ explained in fact? (inaudible)

Student: I would say, "Yes."

Strauss: All, I would not be surprised. But surely that has to be considered. Let us forget about that.

Student: Inaudible.

Strauss: Yes, but as scholars we are obliged to be critical of every thing. I will limit myself entirely to the beginning of your statement to which you referred later on again. And that is the fact that he calls his new science "metaphysics." Now, first we must get a somewhat more precise notion of what metaphysics meant prior to Vico. It dealt with heavenly bodies traditionally.

Student: Inaudible.

Strauss: But you cannot say. The heavenly bodies are the traditionally metaphysics. If the heavenly bodies, and therefore their examination, leads to a mental principle in their movements what does that lead to?

Student: To Physics.

Strauss: To physics, yes. Good. But what is the most simple definition of metaphysics. I mean not sophisticated - very simple. There was an earlier contemporary of Vico called Descartes who wrote a Meditation on First Philosophy. "First philosophy" is a general name for metaphysics. And what is the subject of that meditation?

Student: Inaudible.

Strauss: The mind. You know. So this was the subject. The human mind at least in the higher regions where there is something called soul which belongs to psychology which is somehow the transition between physics and metaphysics. But mind is mind - to do with mentis. That is sufficient at the very first. And that is exactly what Vico's metaphysics is about. On God and the mind. - what are traditional. Good. Metaphysics is that which transcends physics, and that is true of - Vico is right. (explanation on the blackboard of the word "metaphysics") Here is "physics" - the natural world and here is "metaphysics" - this transcends "physics." This is very important. It is only because of the mind. Let us keep

this in mind. But, in addition, the proof of the existence of God belongs traditionally also to metaphysics. Natural theology. He gives a new proof of the existence of God.

Student: inaudible

Strauss: Oh really? That you will find I believe. But let us forget that and simply speak for the time being - Vico's metaphysics has in common with traditional theory the doctrine of God and the mind. But that is about all. Because we understand the mind very differently, as we have indicated. A history of human ideas will not belong to metaphysics in the traditional sense and this is the core of the meaning. But we must proceed step by step.

First let us turn to paragraph 2:

This means, of course, above all Aristotle. Physics leads up to metaphysics. Vico's metaphysics encounters in God the world of the human mind, i.e. - his own expression - the metaphysical world. In order to demonstrate providence in the world of the human mind, i.e. the civil world or the world of nations. In brief, but let us start at the beginning. The metaphysical world as he understands it, is the civil world, but evidently providentially guided. But with the understanding that the providential guidance is to be demonstrated. That is the first point.

In the same manner, he speaks of a scheme which is familiar to all if you but not as a particularly metaphysical concept. Namely, man is by nature a social being. The old, i.e. humanist version contested by Hobbes openly and implicitly by quite a few others. But how does Vico understand man's naturally social character? On the basis of the Christian teaching he said, "Yes, man is by nature social." As man's nature corrupts what becomes of his sociality as a consequence of corruption? He becomes antisocial, to put it very simply. He becomes antisocial. So, while in his nature he is social, as a corrupted man he is antisocial. And we can even say he is asocial, although that is not quite a fact, but it really makes the issue clear. What does it mean - men are antisocial or asocial? Each man strives now only for his private good. There is no longer any natural directiveness towards the common good. But even in this corrupt state and especially among the pagans, as we have shown towards the common good, although they strive only for their private good. This is the proof of divine providence. Now this has to be developed. Men strive, in fact, up towards the common good. But they are all absolutely selfish. They don't care for the common good. Now how is it possible that men achieve the common good and no one of them thinks of the common good? There must be some being which directs their actions so that they in fact contribute towards the common good. Have you ever heard of such a doctrine, of such a scheme?

Student: Smith's doctrine of the invisible hand?

Strauss: Exactly. An invisible hand. Human life is unintelligible except if we make the assumption of an invisible hand. Of course that's not the whole story, but it is crucial. But this is already the formal character of the whole (inaudible)

Student: Could we interpret providence and causes and forces and reflexes?

Strauss: Yes, that comes in later. The same thing. But let us limit ourselves first to the simple schema that we understand. So now we have the proof of that happens in human society and especially in pagan societies where no concept of grace is to be assumed.

Student: Inadmissible

Strauss: No, it is the outcome. For example, you could not derive living providence from the Newtonian laws unless you would say this: You would have the beautiful order of the universe due to purely mechanical forces. How can mere mechanical forces produce a beautiful universe? Would you put it this way? Yes. But this was no longer the way in which the physics of the late 17th century argued.

Student: Inadmissible

Strauss: No, no. One cannot arbitrarily say that. There are all kinds of things which have meanings which everyone granted at all times. That is not the point. But if you take such a massive thing, such a fundamental thing, much larger and more conventional than any particular even like a war, human society as such, it works. Something works and it comes together and it is an absolute fact that no one is concerned with the common good as such. Each is concerned only with his own good, and yet the common good comes about.

Student: It is my understanding that he said that at any point if you divide into factions you can . . .

Strauss: Yes, I don't know if he said that explicitly, but let us proceed so because I think you must first understand what is, I think, a very simple thought in spite of the terribly complex way in which it is stated. Now, therefore, he speaks of a rational, civil theology of living providence; and I think that doctrine is now clear. The logic refers here, not always, to the doctrine of the one true God. The one true God is proven by the very working of the pagan society. Simply corrupt men, without any effective philosophy, are concerned only with their private ends and the common good is produced. And what Mr. \_\_\_\_\_ said about Adam Smith is, if I understand, true, but this is older. Although the term "invisible hand" is, as far as I know, original. There was a man called Mandeville who lived in Victor's time. What is his first name? I don't remember. . . . But these things were already in the air. Good. Now let us then keep this in mind and this simple connection between metaphysics as the study of the world of the human mind identical with the study of the civil world supplies a proof of divine providence and therefore the proof of the existence of God because of the radical selfishness due to the fall of the individual leading nevertheless to the common good.

Now under an entirely new thought the first subject of this new science is character. Character is now understood of course as a type - the type of the political hero, the founder. But he makes it clear immediately afterwards that character is . . .

preceded by the golden age, the age of the gods. And this is truly the first age of each nation. Now, this, to begin with merely a restatement of some old Egyptian version of political development according to which there is first the age of the gods then the age of the heroes, then the age of man. Gods here, of course means the false gods. And he also calls this sometimes theology, but there the theology is of course not the civil theology of which we have spoken in paragraph 2. And this age, the earliest age, the beginning age of mankind, is that of the gods. This is made quite clear. And one has to consider Vice's chronology - Vice's chronology appears in paragraph 9 and paragraph 43 - because there are certain chronological problems which arise in connection with that.

Now the first - paragraph 4 - the first men believed that the gods live on earth. That is to say God's place is Olympus - a haunt Olympus - from the heavens. That is already a very late development and it is called the age of the gods because the gods are shown to live with men on the earth. Now how is this connected with the growth of things I shall not say. Let us see how Vice will explain this in the next part.

Hitherto, Descartes has been concerned with private morality. Now, in his work, it will be concerned with public morality, i.e. with political customs. That is in paragraph 5. Of course it is clear that if the world of the human mind is identical with the civil world, the world of nations, then public morality will be much more important than private morality. Paragraph 6: "Metaphysics deals with the human ideas." Now metaphysics as you have seen can be said to be the doctrine of God and mind, at least the higher part, the truly human part, of the human mind.

Now after Descartes the mind is somehow replaced by the ideas. That is the mind. The mind that which processes ideas. That this change means we don't want to discuss, but after Descartes Locke took this over and, contrary to what you read now in most history books, Locke regarded himself as indebted to Descartes. He made this quite clear. The notion - the way of ideas was Locke's own doctrine. He traces that to Descartes and, whatever the people say that there is a breach between continental rationalism - Descartes, Leibniz, and English empiricism - Locke, Burke and Hume - there is something to that. But they also have something very important in common. They both have to do in a new way with ideas. Whether the ideas are being made, as Descartes asserted or acquired, as Locke asserted is a very important question on the surface. But the basic thing - the ideas - which was the all word for the soul, are never made or acquired. The ideas. That has infinite consequences; infinite, infinite presentation. So cannot trouble with that now. Let me only make one more point. If my memory doesn't deceive me entirely Locke calls his own work, The Essay Concerning Human Understanding, a history. Or am I mistaken? Someone should check on that. It occurs near the beginning. Anyway, in fact he gives a history of the ideas. But the history which Locke gives is that from the newborn babe, as it were, from the newborn babe. And that is the impression - I am confident about that. And how out of this memory of family conflicts and so forth we will have a history of the individual man. Vice will not give a history of human ideas of the individual, but the history of human ideas of the human race, i.e. the human race is understood as a kind of

being which has a childhood and which will come back later on. The first step Vice understands, the childhood of the human race, in order then to trace the development of the idea from the childhood to the fully developed. How Vice's history of the human ideas is related to the Lockean ideas of the human race is a difficult question. I don't feel clearly about that. Because, after all, these early men - these early babies - grow up, and there must be something in common between the growing up of the early baby and the baby now. This is not of great interest to Vice. I have not found any reference to it. Yes?

Student: inaudible (reference to paragraph 4)

Strauss: Yes, that is true. You know, at the end of the 19th century someone - a pupil of Darwin - stated a law which he called the fundamental law of biogenesis, applying equally to the genesis of the individual and of the race. In other words, the development of the individual and the development of the race have a parallelism and throw light on this. You know they tried to prove by embryology that the embryo goes through all the stages through which the human race has gone, the age of fish and I don't know what. But today people are much more orthodox. But the history of the ideas in the individual, from sheer sense perception up to a high concept is of no concern to Vice. He is concerned with the character of the grown up man, ideas as they are related to the ideas of the grown up man in a period of civilization.

So metaphysics deals first with the human ideas, but historically, i.e. with the history of human ideas. He deals, therefore, first with the first form of human ideas which are crude and brute thoughts about the gods. This is at the beginning and this is in a way decisive for the whole work, because in Vice's few errors about the beginning have infinite consequences regarding the later development.

Now the next point we will study then is this. Metaphysics is, in itself, a purely philosophic science. But it is a history. It must, therefore, have something to do with the actual development. With what can be known only historically, or as Vice calls it philologically. But what he means by philology is coextensive with what we call history. Now what he wants to bring about it a kind of synthesis of philosophy and history. And he calls this synthesis which he wants to bring about, a natural theology, i.e. a natural account of the genesis of the use of words in the human mind.

Now let us now consider for the moment the history of philology. This is doctrine of all things which depend on human arbitrary choice. What does he mean by that? Let us study laws. Now laws are made by men through human fiat. Language is made by human fiat.

What we call this fiat, and in Greek it is called \_\_\_\_\_ is due to a different fiat of the different societies. Fiat means, however, a form of authority. Some authority, the authority of the people is concerned if at the root are those things with which the philology of history is concerned. And therefore philology deals with things established by authority, whereas philosophy deals with things which are by nature, not established by authority.

Never forget, although these things - these gods, for example - depend in a way on human arbitrariness and human authority, the



process is never completely natural. This is the first characteristic theory of Vico. When Plato or, say, Aristotle spoke of these things - popular notions of gods, for instance - they ultimately traced them also to some hierarchy, and the term for that was some agreement, possible agreement, some free thing, as it were, out of certain views which had developed in the community up to a certain point. And the Greek word for that was nomos which means not merely law but everything of this nature.

What Vico loses, we can say, up to this point is that he did understand what was hitherto understood to be dependent on nomos, to be merely posited by human positing as natural. In other words that there is such a thing as Zeus and Jupiter with the Romans, and the equivalent with the Germans and so on. This is not an act of positing, Greek positing or Roman positing or Teutonic positing. But since this is everywhere the same nature is effective in this. What hitherto was understood as due to nomos, must also be understood as due to nature. We just follow his argument and we will, I trust, get somewhere that merits where we go.

Student: inaudible

Strauss: Let me put it this way. Vico abolishes that, but he implied it in the first page. There could have been

(inaudible)

But what Vico says now in contradicting the tradition: There is no fact. In other words, the traditional view was, and the practical view which was underlying in one way or another the view of his time was the appeal to natural instinct. And so, his view of the conventional things. Vico's first thesis can be stated: that convention, too is natural. Therefore it has been overstated quite simply. He didn't say it this way, but it amounts to this. There is nothing which is not natural. Surely too convention is natural. That is not sufficient for understanding Vico, but this is an important point in his argument because we will later on see that he maintains the distinction between natural and conventional. Well, I didn't want to keep you waiting for this point. What he says, in fact, when, say, a Greek philosopher was confronted with a variety of tribal customs he would say, "This is due ultimately to convention." By the way, this thesis has reappeared in our enlightened century in Benedict, or Ruth Benedict, Patterns of Culture, no - that's very good, . . . and she speaks of two North American tribes under the same dramatic conditions, same race, everything else, their nature is the same. But she perceived entirely different customs. The one are tough, war-like fellows. The others are very gentle. It is impossible to explain the difference in terms of climate, colony or what have you. And what she in fact said was this: that tribe A adopted value system A and tribe B adopted value system B. And it is impossible to explain these choices. Any tribe has to adopt a value system. Which it adopts is really tossing a coin. There may be inferences of climate in other matters, but in this very instance that is what they had in mind. That is fundamentally such a choice which can no longer be reduced to anything else.

Now what Vico says is this: In order to make such a choice, in order to toss a coin, he will have to be already a rational being. Men-boy can't do that. But early men after the fall, the pagans, were

something like higher monkeys. They were brutish fellows, and so they were absolutely unable to make any convention. What they did cannot have had any convention. Convention can come in only after man has developed his reason properly. Therefore in civilized society the distinction between the natural and the conventional is maintained by *Vico*. But it is the (inaudible) so *Hobbes'* difficulty is now dispensed of.

Now in paragraph 8, yes this brief paragraph: "Men became civilized and human through religion." But what does *Vico* mean by religion? If you read the context it is not distinguished from superstition. He is speaking always of *Hobbes'* religion. This is part of his demonstration. Superstition and some very terrible human sacrifice and what have you, are necessary. They are necessary. That men develop out of the state of bestiality in which he was after the fall.

He always makes the distinction between the natural rights of the Hebrews and natural rights of the gentiles. And his theme is the natural right of the gentiles. The Hebrews were the only nation which did not lose its humanity through the fall. The other human beings lost it and decayed into a bestial state.

Let us read paragraph 14: "From the forest where the urn is placed a plough stands forth, signifying that the fathers of the first people were the first-strong men of history. Hence the founders of first gentile nations above mentioned were the Herculeses (of whom Varro counted a good forty and the Egyptians claimed theirs to be the most ancient). For these Herculeses subdued the first lands of the world and brought them under cultivation. Thus the first fathers of the gentile nations - were were 1) just in virtue of the supposed piety of observing. . ."

Strauss: Of the "supposed piety" - of their first religion. Go on.

Student: So that justice among all people is naturally taught along with piety.

Strauss: The "naturally" means that there is no reasoning involved. How this happens we will explain later.

Student: 2) Prudent in sacrificing to obtain or clearly to understand the auspices, and thus to take good counsel of what, by the commands of Jove, they should undertake in life, and 3) temperate in the institution of matrimony - were also, as is here indicated 4) strong men." Hence new principles are given to moral philosophy, in order that the recorded wisdom of the philosophers may conspire with the vulgar wisdom of lawmakers. By these principles all the virtues have their roots in piety and religion, by which alone the virtues are made effective in action, and by reason of which men proposed to themselves as good whatever God willed.

Strauss: Now do you see here the reasoning? Here savages knew nothing of God. They know only of their false gods. That you must always keep in mind. *Vico* denies that the early religion is a relic of original monarchists. He denies that. So *Vico* sticks with this notion which emerged among mankind which has become completely bestial. Let us read. Finish this section.

Student: Now principles are given also to economic doctrine by which sons, so long as they are in the power of their fathers, must be considered to be in the family state, and consequently are in no other way to be formed and confirmed in all their studies than in piety and religion. Since they are not yet capable of understanding commonwealth and laws they are to reverence and fear their fathers as living images of God, so as to be naturally disposed to follow the religion of their fathers and to defend their fatherland which preserves their families for them, and so to obey the laws ordained for the preservation of their religion and fatherland. (For divine providence ordains human things with this eternal counsel that families should first be founded by means of religions, and that upon the families commonwealths should then arise by means of laws.)

Strauss: Yes. Now which are these religions which he speaks of here? These are the most crude forms of postdiluvian pagan religions. A bestial kind of men which we will explain later. But this which was traditionall regarded as a kind of punishment for a sin or consequence, is regarded by Vico from the point of view that it was, as it were, a divine lesson. These people were just crudely superstitious, full of fear, haunted by terrible images. But this was the beginning of their civilization. Such interests leading without anyone's being aware, to the common good. These crude, bestial beginnings led without any inkling of it to, say, the highest peak of Greece, Rome, Egypt and so on. This is strictly speaking a proof of God. No one could - the people who made, as it were, that peak, had no inkling of what it was good for. What they thought it was good for, it wasn't good for at all. Because the superstitious rites didn't help them against lightening or whatever it may be. But in a long way, a roundabout way of centuries, it made them radically humane beings, people capable of humanity.

Student: Doesn't a difficulty arise because you are stopping this process and saying, "At this point we can now see that it was good." But it is an eternal process, and it's going to continue on. There is no point at which you can say, "This is good."

Strauss: What do you mean by that?

Student: It's an eternal process. With the possibility that the arrows continue on each knob - that there should be a continuing arrow on this side and a continuing arrow there. That the divine may continue around.

Strauss: It's impossible. It can't go on indefinitely. The ideal determinant is the general schema. The beginnings must have been very correct. The peak must be somewhere here and then there must be decay. At least some decay. But this is the actual history in each particular case. This is I think very important to the idea of eternity. There is the law, the law which you find in all histories, that is the idea of history.

Student: The law meaning divine law.

Strauss: Yes. This law doesn't undergo change.

Student: But the fact that there was an eternal I thought meant that you couldn't stop it.

Strauss: There is this indication, but it refers only to the character of the law, and not to the actual life of human beings on earth. But we have not yet sufficient evidence to settle this.

Now let us read paragraph 16

Student: "The plough shows only the point of the share and hides the moldboard. Before the use of iron was known, the share had to be made of a curved piece of very hard wood, capable of breaking and turning the earth. The Latins called the moldboard urbs, whence the ancient urbs, 'curved.'

Strauss: It will simply dismiss this etymology. Some of them are sensible, but most of them are very fanciful.

Student: "The moldboard is hidden to signify that the first cities . . . to save had already reached the stage of humanity should not again become confounded with the wanderers who still nefariously held property and women in common."

Strauss: So you have here obviously two different acts of divine providence. One act of divine providence is a prohibition against idolatry etc. addressed to Moses. That is one thing. I think that is quite clear. And the full notion of these early men is that they lived in this abominable communion of things and women. But what about this abominable institution itself? This is also a part of divine providence because it was through divine providence that this bestial state arose. Vico does not make over a distinction between what God instituted and what he permitted which would be done in orthodox theology.

Now we can say that Moses' fight against idolatry is something different from the fight against original atheism because that is, of course, also in existence. In this bestial state they were simply godless. Compared with the state of bestial godlessness the most barbaric superstition constituted a progress. To that extent, the most abominable superstition is a work of divine providence because the only way in which mankind could progress was through these stages, just as a child must go through all kinds of fantastic notions and fables in order to become a human being because his reason is not yet developed.

In paragraph 17 Strauss makes somewhat clearer the status of early men. Let us read it.

Student: "There may be seen at the left side of the altar a rudder . . . they were alone and hence weak and finally miserable and unhappy, because lacking all the goods which are necessary for preservation and security of life."

Strauss: This is the beginnings as far as they are considered in The New Science. A bestial condition which remains as the fully undeveloped potentiality. So that is pre-rational, and all the windings from there up to civilization are divinely ordained. What is the first step out of this absolutely bestial condition? The beginning of paragraph 18.

Student: "To these others then, the impious-nomadic-weak, fleeing for their lives from the stranger, came seeking refuge, and the

pious-strong killed the villent among them . . ."

Strauss: And so on. That is the provisional statement. But the key point, which he only alluded to, is this: The first step came about because there was from the very beginning a difference between the stronger and the weaker, and the stronger laid the foundation. And after the stronger had laid a foundation, the weaker organized themselves or were organized around the stronger. That is the beginning of the development. Surely there is inequality in the state of nature, a theme which we will also find in paragraph 25, for example. Now let us consider a few more passages.

In paragraph 22 he speaks - but we cannot read it all - he speaks of this natural order of ideas. What he wants to find out is the sequence in which the social ideas are developed. And this is, I think, a great description of the way of providence with man.

Paragraph 25. Go on.

Student: "The first of these symbols is the fasces . . . and consequently were subject to no one but God."

Strauss: These primitive king-father-priests in control of sacrifices and auspices commanded them what they believed the gods wished - to go to war to destroy, or to destroy or whatever. And how does he go on?

Student: "So the fasces are . . ."

Strauss: No, no. They were in consequence subject to no one else but God. What does this subjection to God with a capital "G" mean? That this subjection was not known to them, of course, for their consciousness was subject to their God. Is this not clear? You see this ambiguity goes through the whole thing. When he speaks of natural theology this natural theology as a teaching of Vice refers to the one true God. But the natural theology as it existed for these pagans is, of course, blind to God as God. Here natural theology means that notion of God which naturally had developed. That is very confusing, but once one has made it clear to oneself one can understand it. Read on.

Student: "So the fasces are a bundle of litui or rods of divination . . . Now these reigning senates, to content the revolting bands of famuli and reduce them to obedience, granted them an agrarian law, which is found to have been the first civil law born in the world."

Strauss: Let us stop here. Now what he means is this. These stranger individuals in the first stage, after they had become in their way of life through fear of lightening or whatever it is, and having established a kind of matrimony - the first rudiments of civilization - they gathered around themselves the impious weak - those who had not gone through this first stage of civilization - and these were the clients of these first patricians. But, of course, these impious fools who were the clients had, of course, beliefs more strong if they banded together against their rulers, and the only thing to do is that the rulers band together against them. This is the first community, the first society which Vice believes he can confirm through the reports about early Romans. He contends that this has happened everywhere afterwards.

But once this state has been settled to some extent, the clients under certain conditions are sufficiently strong to assert themselves, and then the patricians must make them certain definite, clearly formulable concessions. The first civil rights. Prior to that everything was natural rights. Not natural right in the traditional sense, but it was a right which arose by nature without any human reasoning.

Now, what is the essence of civil law as he understands it here? That is something he deals with in the next paragraph. We cannot read the whole paragraph. I wish I had made a note of that. Here in the middle of paragraph 26.

Student: "The origins of the commonwealths, which had at their birth a most low aristocratic form . . ."

Strauss: No, I am sorry. It is not need that. Let us turn to paragraph 27.

Student: "The sword leaning on the fasces indicates that heroic law was a law of force but subject to religion, which alone can keep force in its place in their place where judiciary laws do not yet exist . . ."

Strauss: So, in other words, civil laws are judicial laws. That's the same thing here. The original right, the heroic right, was a right of - how would you translate \_\_\_\_\_?

Student: Our violent religion, our secondary religion.

Strauss: Yes, but religion means here, of course, not true religion. That's crucial. But rather superstition in force. And only in the later development there emerged civil laws, i.e. judicial laws. Yes?

Student: "This law is precisely that of Achilles, the hero sung by Homer to the Greeks as an example of heroic virtue, who made arms the arbiter of right."

Strauss: He was the ultimate arbitrement in arms. Read the next sentence.

Student: "Here is revealed the origin of duels . . ."

(and so goes)

Lecture VTopic: The Intelligence, Book I, October 14, 1963

I cannot blame you for blaming Vico so much because it is very difficult to understand Mr. Vico. Part of the difficulty was caused by you. Because you thought much too much about the secondary problems. Vico's social science, or private research, is surely not private reading. How could a valuable social scientist speak of private life? But what is the precise question? You spoke at great length - at reasonable great length - of Vico's attack on Eden, on the Egyptian claims. Now what is the meaning of that account? You made it clear to some extent, but you didn't stick to your point. You asked the question, "What are the criterion by which Vico can make a distinction between basically true and false statements?" What was your guess?

Student: inaudible

Strauss: I believe you did not consider sufficiently the content of these papers, the time span claimed by the Egyptians. Now the first criterion is the Bible. If Fabulus' account of the Egyptian Garden of Eden contradicts the Biblical account it is one thing. Whether that is sufficient abrogation of Vico is not the question. For example, if they speak of something which happened 20,000 years ago this would be incompatible with the literal meaning of Genesis. But there may be a claim about something which happened, say, 3,000 years ago which is perfectly compatible with the Biblical time span, how can we distinguish there between what is true. Yes? We cannot guess sufficiently on the basis of what we have read (inaudible). This is developed in the next section where he will say how early non-Jewish men must have been - whatever is incompatible with this must have been - from. So, in other words, if a high stage of science is claimed for Egypt, or for a very old age of Egypt, it is against human nature, and cannot have been. But this avenue we have not yet pursued. I think we must look at paragraph 47 on which this matter turns. Now what was the popular Egyptian story? That they possessed a wisdom infinitely older than the Biblical wisdom. Moses was learned in the wisdom of the Egyptians, ergo the wisdom of the Egyptians antedated Moses, and this can easily be used for anti-Biblical purposes.

There is in Machiavelli's Discourses, Book 2, chapter 5, a brief reference to \_\_\_\_\_, a late Greek historian, who accounted the Egyptian date which would make 45,000 years or whatever the age of Egyptian society. Now this is incompatible with Biblical chronology. Machiavelli alludes to the difficulty, he doesn't develop it, but it is perfectly clear that this was an argument which played a certain role in heretical literature. Yes?

Student: In a passage from paragraph 9 he says, "The same twofold evidence proves the religion of the Hebrews more ancient than those by which the nations were founded, and hence the truth of the Christian religion."

Strauss: Obviously. If you take the state of theological controversy at the time this is perfectly clear. Everything which contradicts the chronology of the Bible and makes questionable the truth of the Bible, destroys the Christian religion in its re-

quirament of Biblical acceptances. If you assume that Christian theology in 1700 was identical with that of Paul Tillich today then you will not understand a word.

Student: Would all Christians at this time agree that the Hebrews had to be the oldest . . .

Strauss: No, of course not. The argument is a bit more subtle than I stated. The Egyptians laid claim to very high wisdom of very ancient antiquity. These are two themes. He does not make that quite clear, but we must understand it if we are to follow his argument. First, the most ancient antiquity, say 40,000 years old. This he can, in a way, easily refute by reference to Biblical chronology. But there is no reason the Egyptians should not had in the year 3,000 B.C. a very high wisdom, in accordance with the Biblical remarks about Moses learned in the wisdom of the Egyptians. And since this is a Biblical remark it is probably compatible with the Bible. Now a simple example. According to the Old Testament reports Moses was deepest, but in worldly matters he was not the brightest of men. And the whole grand science of public administration which he needed as a governor he learned from the Medianite Jethro. That's stated in the Bible. Because the Bible is not, after all, primarily concerned with public administration, so why can't you learn it elsewhere. I mean, the Bible is more intelligent than many of its orthodox interpreters who might deny that even public administration could be non-Hebraic.

But if we return to Vico, first there is the question of the sheer antiquity of Eden. And the claims contradict the Biblical report. And the second question is the antiquity of Egyptian wisdom. This is an entirely different proposition. Vico might have said, "The Egyptians are really as old as . . . and the Egyptians themselves said," which, from this point of view differs from the Bible. But the key point here is that wisdom cannot be very old because of the very, very long time needed for ascending from primitive barbarism to high wisdom. This is a distinction which you must always keep in mind.

Now, let me first remind myself and you of the bare minimum we found out in our discussion of the Autobiography and of the "Explanation of the Frontispiece." I remind you of a simple scheme, namely (blackboard explanation) Tacitus=Machiavelli, the "Faught" and the "Wis." The synthesis of the two attempted by Bacon. Bacon is the third. And then the fourth man is Grotius by which he indicates that he will achieve a synthesis with a view to law, which Bacon had not done. Bacon tried to do it regarding philosophy in general. Law. And the most specific question is natural right. He will give a teaching regarding natural right which is, in a way, a synthesis of Plato and Machiavelli. This much we retain from the Autobiography. Now what does this synthesis look like? He starts from the premise of the new science. The new science will not speak of revealed religion. He will accept it and not be concerned with it. He is concerned only with the natural right of the gentiles.

The gentiles were to begin with - after the fall - on a very low level, like beasts. The Jews were never touched by that, although the fall, according to the New Testament version touched the Jews



as well. But Vico's interest here is very general, so only the gentiles. They lived in a bestial condition, and out of that there emerged a civilization by natural reason alone. And the natural right of the gentiles is primarily the right obtained in this first stage or in the stage immediately after the overcoming of mere beastliness. And the key idea here is this: that some degree of virtue, of justice, emerged out of sheer selfishness, of sheer violence. Men prompted by mere selfishness produced society and therewith indirectly a concern with the common good, not because they were concerned with the common good, but by a kind of washing we can say. In other words, truly the "invisible hand" of Adam Smith, that is the "invisible hand" of providence is envisioned here. So the strictly rational, philosophic proof of divine providence is given by the fact that society could emerge out of purely asocial or antisocial human beings. The various manifestations of this we will discuss when we come to them. But this is, I think, the point which must be kept in mind: that the natural rights of the nations can be said to have this principle, the emergence of justice out of injustice. And this process being a necessary process.

And now let us turn to our assignment for today. It is, of course, a strangely constructed book. A long explanation of the Frontispiece, then a long explanation of the Chronological Table. Only in the third section does he begin the methodic presentation of the new science. We have to be satisfied with the data which we have here and proceed from there. Now what he does in the explanation of the Chronological Table, as Mr.                      pointed out, is a correction of the wrong chronologies of the gentiles. It refers most to the wrong chronology regarding the learning of the gentiles which applies also to other matters. For example, regarding the law of the Twelve Tables and so on. By the way, Vico quotes here                     , Machiavelli and the Bible. Now we cannot go into all the details here but externally the discussion looks like this: a defense of Biblical chronology against the exorbitant claims of the Egyptians in particular. Now whether this is Vico's last word we must see.

In paragraph 45 - read the beginning.

Student: "But certainly such boundless antiquity did not yield much recorded wisdom to the inland Egyptians."

Strauss: Yes. So, in other words, he grants here apparently the "boundless antiquity" of the Egyptians. The Egyptians may be as old as they claim, i.e. they may be much older than the Biblical account would permit, but surely they cannot be so ancient in wisdom. Is this clear? This is a key point because of the savage beginnings.

Student: In that other passage that I read before he doesn't say anything about their wisdom he just says that if any gentile religion is older than the Hebrew religion then the truth of the Christian religion is called in doubt.

Strauss: Yes. And, of course, the Christian religion is much later than the pagan religions and the question if of the Hebrew, the Jewish religion.

Student: Yes, I know that. The question is whether he might be attacking the truth of the Christian religion.

Strauss: That is the same. Questioning the authority of truth of the Old Testament means to attack the truth of Christianity.

Student: But why does he say this?

Strauss: This was the common opinion apart from some heretical sects - the Marcionites who were completely heretical for their times and to some extent the early Socinians who tried to make the Christian religion wholly independent of the Old Testament. But orthodox Christian opinion always regarded the Old Testament as part of the Christian revealed documents. And therefore an attack on the historical or other truth of the Old Testament was regarded as an attack on Christianity. It's as simple as that.

Student: I thought that it might be a tactic of simply imputing the view to your opponent so that you can attack him.

Strauss: Yes, I know that this kind of polemic exists, but in Vico's case it was not an imputation, it was a fact. To repeat, only Christian heretics like the Marcionites in early Christianity and to some extent the Socinians who are now Unitarians tried to make the whole religion wholly independent of the Old Testament. Then he would have to accept Socinianism, which would have been as bad or worse than accepting

Student: inaudible

Strauss: There is a possibility that he didn't accept even Christianity. That is another matter, but we have no basis - at least up to now - to know that.

I repeat, here he seems to grant the boundless antiquity of Egypt which would imply a rejection of the Bible as it was then understood, but he surely cannot accept the antiquity of wisdom because that would be against the nature of things, men having come from a barbarous beginning, and it takes millenium, so to speak, to get out of that beast-like condition to the stage of wisdom.

He mentions in this connection, in this paragraph - he calls Greece the nation of the philosophers, i.e. the Greeks are the nation of philosophers, not the Egyptians. And therefore later on the Egyptians, after they had become aware of Greek philosophy, interpreted philosophy into these old Egyptian times. That is like a present-day Chinese who would say that what Confucius said was the same as what St. Augustine said. You know this kind of thing. You know these kinds of people? They are in all places of the world. His point is that the Greeks are the nation of philosophers and therefore also of the fine arts, i.e. Egyptian art is not fine art, that is not a valid usage and so on and so on.

Here an indication of this whole thing seems to be if philosophy, if the characteristic of the third age - you remember the age of the gods, the age of the heroes, the age of human reason - if

philosophy is a characteristic of the third age, then the third age doesn't exist in all nations. This is among the Greeks, but not all nations. We must keep this in mind in order to see that what he calls the ideal history - remember, the gods, heroes and men and all the details of this, they are not necessarily true in all particulars of each individual. We will get plenty of evidence of that later. I mentioned it only in passing.

The Egyptian's prejudice of their unusual antiquity has its reasoning wrong. Not merely in a theoretical error. They simply compound and count 20,000 where they should only count 2,000. But there is a passion crying in the direction of this over-estimation. In paragraph 48, beginning.

Student: This false opinion of their great antiquity was caused among the Egyptians by a property of the human mind - that of being indefinite - by which it is often led to believe that the things it does not know are vastly greater than in fact they are?

Strauss: So here he gives already one of the axioms which we will mention later. The human mind has the characteristic of being indefinite which means here the same as infinite. So it makes assertions about things which it doesn't know. Therefore, the unknown about which it makes assertions by virtue of its infinite characteristic, it makes bigger than they are. Is this clear? Therefore the unknown in the particularly remote past, is aggrandized infinitely. But what is the motive behind that aggrandizement of the unknown? That is made clear in paragraph 50.

Student: "But the Chinese are found writing in hieroglyphs just as the ancient Egyptians did (to say nothing of the Scythians, who did not even know how to put their hieroglyphs in writing). For many thousands of years they had no commerce with other nations by whom they might have been informed concerning the . . ."

Strauss: By the way, one would have to consider with the Chronology Table in hand whether there can be many thousands of years according to the Biblical chronology to this whole thing. But this I mention only in passing. In other words, there could be only three at the most. Can you call three many thousands?

Student: Inevitable

Strauss: Yes, yes. That only in passing, that if one reads this closely there appear all kinds of difficulties. This is simply one example. Did you want to say something about Confucius?

Student: He mentions Confucius later on and he says that Confucius probably lived about 500 years before Christ and this proves that they did have a kind of civilization then - 500 years before Christ.

Strauss: Alright, but let us say 500 B.C. and 3000 years, you come to 3,500 which is still compatible with Biblical chronology. But this is not crucial here. Go on.

Students: "Just as a man confined while asleep in a very small dark room, in horror of darkness on waking believes it certainly much larger than groping with his hands will show it to be, so, in the darkness of their chronology, the Chinese and the Egyptians have done, and the Chaldeans likewise."

Strauss: Yes, what is the motive here? What induces men to regard the unknown as bigger than it is? The motive is fear. That's all I mean. So this is the point. The motive is fear in these early men, naturally because they were so weak fundamentally. And you remember the famous thesis of Hobbes that fear started the whole thing.

Now paragraph 51 has been properly appreciated by Mr. \_\_\_\_\_ who gave a summary before. The first people of the world were the Hebrew people whose spring was Adam. Now is this the orthodox teaching? Who is the first father of the Jewish people?

Student: Abraham.

Strauss: Abraham. That's right. Not Adam because Adam was the father of all men. Even Abraham is the father not only of the Jews, but of the Arabs through Ismail. So Adam surely not. But there is a doctrine which he will refer to somewhere - he refers somewhere to the pre-Adamites, doesn't he? (writes on blackboard) \_\_\_\_\_ in Latin about 1665 wrote a book, Pre-Adamites, in which he tried to prove on the basis of the chronological difficulties plus the nudist colony in America as well as the Far East, that the Biblical account cannot be literally true, and he tried to reconcile this difficulty by a very complicated interpretation of the letters to the Romans with the result that Adam is the ancestor only of the Jews. This whole story of fall and redemption is a strictly intra-Jewish business, and this means, of course, that pagan nations - although he doesn't say so - never had a fall and, therefore, didn't need a redemption. But this is off the subject.

Now the key point is that the whole Biblical history is a Jewish history from the beginning and not just from the blood - from Abraham - was \_\_\_\_\_ (inaudible) But this I mention only in passing. Let us read, then, and we must omit very many things, paragraph 52.

Student: "In this undertaking we shall be greatly helped by the antiquity of the Egyptians . . ."

Strauss: Excuse me. The last sentence of 51 let us also read.

Student: This is the proper starting-point for universal history, which all scholars say is defective in its beginnings."

Strauss: Yes, that is, of course a very great term, to call the history of the gentiles only - although they are the majority of men - the universal history, contradicting the ordinary meaning of universal which means, of course, of all men. Then \_\_\_\_\_ wrote his Universal History a generation before Vico, it was, of course, Biblical history and integrated into it the data from Greek and Roman and other history. So this is another

sign that there is something not prior to orthodoxy, not prior strictly to that.

Student: (paragraph 52) "In this undertaking we shall be greatly helped by the antiquity of the Egyptians . . . the third epistolary, with characters agreed on by the people."

Strauss: In other words, there are three ages of themes, and there are correspondingly three ages of languages which implies that in the first age, the age of the gods, there was not yet any articulate language. These were beast-like men. Now, of course, the great question which we have then raised: with what right can we accept these fabulous stories of the Egyptians as historical data. And today no one would do that, obviously. One can only say, "Perhaps this is only a kind of invention for Vico's own argument." In other words, will he actually need this tripartition? In other words, this could be a kind of previous little house, as it were, that he builds up, and later on deserts when it becomes unsuitable. Go on.

Student: "This division of time was not followed by Marcus Terentius Varro . . . namely that all Roman things, divine and human, were native to Latium."

Strauss: Now let us understand this. First he says, and that is quite a change, i.e. what he says in the first half of this paragraph, the very antiquity of the ancient Egyptians supplies us with the most important key to their origin. Now that is no formal contradiction because being 4000 years old, 4000 B.C., is still very old, although it is not 40,000. The second, Varro did not wish to say what he knew. Varro did not wish to say what he knew. He gave the Roman origins instead of universal origins. In other words, in order to recognize the universal character of Romans he found in it only Roman origins. That means he boosted his own. And this is, according to Vico, a general vice of men. That notions

(inaudible)

Varro didn't do this in the case of the Law of the Twelve Tables. In the case of the Twelve Tables he traced them to Greece, and didn't say they are indigenous, whereas according to Vico the Law of the Twelve Tables is, in fact, indigenous. Now, of course, this is another kind of booster. The severed Romans claimed to have already borrowed from these five nations of the Greeks. Now, to what extent this remark about Varro - this half criticism of Varro - reflects what Vico himself does in regard to the Bible is a question which we must keep in mind although it cannot be answered. In other words, whether Vico's making the Jews the first nation and making the first man, Adam, the ancestor of the Jews and only of the Jews, whether this doesn't correspond to a general inclination of all mankind to boost one's own. This is here only a question.

Now he develops this theme of what we can call the boosting of the nation, in the next paragraph. But then, of course, the question arises, if all men do that are the Jews not guilty of the same possibly? Paragraph 54.

Student: "The first column is dedicated to the Hebrews, who, on the most reliable authority of Flavius Josephus, the Jew,"

Strauss: "The Jew," mind you. Go on.

Student: "And Lactantius Firmianus"

Strauss: A Christian.

Student: "to be cited later, lived unknown to all the gentile nations . . . according to the calculations of Philo the Jew."

Strauss: Again, you see, "the Jew." Go on.

Student: "If his estimate varies from that of Eusebius, the deviation is one of a mere fifteen hundred years"

Strauss: And what is Eusebius's denomination?

Student: Christian.

Strauss: Christian, yes.

Student: "which is a very short period of time compared with the variation among the calculations made by the Chaldeans, Scythians, Egyptians, and in our own day by the Chinese. And this should be an invincible proof that the Hebrews were the first people in our world."

Strauss: In "our world." "Our world" is, of course, a qualification. Yes?

Student: "and that in the sacred history they have accurately preserved their memories from the very beginning of the world."

Strauss: "Of the world." So after he has indicated the possible difference between our world and other worlds, he goes back to "the world." So the claims of the Jews are not open to this criticism because they are based on the most reliable witnesses who happened to be in this case also Jews suffering from the slight disadvantage that they are not canonic Jews. Josephus, as you know, (inaudible) the destruction of the temple, of not being canonic men (inaudible)  
I mean they are canonic neither for Jews nor for Christians. So this is, I think, a brief indication of the problem.

Let us turn to paragraph 83. That seems to be very relevant here.

Student: "Called also Sanchuniathon and entitled "the historian of truth" (on the authority of Clement of Alexandria in his Stromata). He wrote the history of Phoenicia in vulgar characters"

Strauss: I.e. in alphabet form. Yes?

Student: "while the Egyptians and the Scythians . . . having no dealings with other nations, they had no true idea of time."

Strauss: That means when he speaks of the Scythians and the Chinese, that to live separated from the rest of the world makes it impossible to have this desirable chronology. Now the question is, did he really never think of this complication when he wrote? Or did he? It is hard to decide. But the question, I

believe, must be considered. Now, then in the sequel he speaks of the three ages of - or rather the third age of the Chaldeans. Let me just give a survey of that. We cannot possibly read that all.

In paragraph 62, for instance, he shows us the difficulty of reconciling the bestial beginnings of the nations with the Biblical account. Now, the difficulty I think we see is this: Briefly, no articulate language. What does the Bible teach about language? How was Adam taught? Adam was taught and had the language. Then what was the next big even regarding language according to the Bible?

Student: The Tower of Babel?

Strauss: The Tower of Babel, i.e. up to the time of the Tower of Babel, a universal language, all men spoke the same language. According to the traditional view that was Hebrew, but not the canonic view, only the traditional view as far as I know.

After the Tower of Babel, of course, there was also human language. In other words, a single human language was replaced by a variety of seventy or so. All human languages are Biblical languages, articulate languages. And where is the place in this schema for those gentiles who did not yet have an articulate language? That is the great difficulty into which we cannot go, which I have only to point out that we cannot simply take for granted that Vico has dealt with this. Yes?

Student: inaudible

Strauss: No. I suppose he would naturally make a distinction between language and writing. That he would do, but he would say that writing is lower as writing than alphabetic writing. And secondly he would claim as a basis of his actions that there was a stage when men even spoke hieroglyphically. That's the key point.

Student: inaudible

Strauss: Well, what he thinks about it I have not yet come to it. First there is mere science. If you will look at animals and know them a bit you will notice that they make different sounds on different occasions. Then, in addition, men can do more. They can point. So you can go to a shop, for example, and not say a word. Simply show this, and he knows you want matches. And you wouldn't need words for that. Swift has studied some of these people in the third part of Gulliver, for other reasons. Because they are too abstracted from him, they in turn (inaudible) Put at any rate, clearly hieroglyphic writing clearly has nothing to do with inarticulate languages, but Vico has said in addition that there was a period of hieroglyphic speaking.

At the end of paragraph 67 there is a matter of some importance about the natural right of the nations. Only the end of paragraph 67.

Student: "And as if, finally, providence had not made provision for this human necessity. . . but with these same human customs."

Strauss: Yes, statutory brings this addition - it's law. The natural right does not have this character of law - written or unwritten - but of custom. What is the difference between law and custom? In one sense it is this: a custom is how people customarily behave. A custom does not have explicitly the character of an "ought." Law, written or unwritten, has it. Do this or do that. You know, custom is something entirely different.

The first stage, the natural right of nations, has the character of custom, as distinguished from laws, written or unwritten. That we must keep in mind.

Now in paragraph 79 - well it's just a minor thing, but to give you the basic idea . . . In the last sentence of paragraph 79 the idea was referred to by Mr. \_\_\_\_\_'s paper.

Student: "It was perhaps because of all this that Cicero in his On the Nature of the Gods suspected that such a person as Orpheus never existed in the world."

Strauss: Now if we could actually easily find out, that passage occurs in the first book, paragraph 107 of The Nature of the Gods and that is the Epicurean book, where the Epicurean presents his talk. In addition, this speech is very interesting. It is regarding \_\_\_\_\_ (inaudible) which Vico doesn't mention.

This anticipates a later point which we will make clearer the more we advance. To some extent what Vico is doing is only a restoration of the view held by a number of ancient men, and not necessarily such extremists as the Epicureans, but also by Aristotle, Polybius. To some extent, what Vico does is in not way peculiarly modern, but only a critique of past traditions which have come to be believed much more in the times, say, after Polybius, than they were in the high period of Greek or Roman thought.

In the sequel, paragraphs 80 and 81, Vico gives a kind of vindication of the allegedly immoral mythology of the pagans. In other words the original language of the men who became human beings, as it were, out of savages, were not the originators of these immoral fables of Greek mythology. This was already a product of the dissolute stages of Greek or Roman society. Originally these stories of adultery and murders and so on, had an entirely different meaning. This he develops here.

In paragraph 82 we find a simple formulation of Vico's principle of a theologic interpretation over which Mr. \_\_\_\_\_ was looking.

Student: "Hercules, with whom the heroic time of Greece reaches its climax. The same difficulties recur for Hercules if we take him for a real man, the companion of Jason in the expedition to Colchis, and not, as we shall find him to be in respect of his labors, a heroic character of the founder of peoples."

Strauss: You see, there is one canon of this interpretation. Early men were unable to form universal concepts - of the founder, which would apply to any founder. And therefore they use the proper name, Hercules. And then there were, of course, n Hercules



and all these think they are accepted as individuals. But once you have understood this mentality of what he will call later on the pre-logical mind, then one has the key to the interpretation of early stories. And how does he establish this principle? That early man is something like a child, and so by observing the defects of children's minds we see and understand somewhat the defects of early minds. And then all these things fall into shape. Now this is a very questionable procedure it is clear, but we must, of course, see this point.

Paragraph 85.

Student: "Sesostris reigns in Thebes. Year of the world 2949. This king brought under his empire the three other dynasties of Egypt, and is evidently the king Ramses of whom the Egyptian priest tells Germanicus in Tacitus."

Strauss: What I could not figure out is how this is related to the date of the Mosaic legislation. One would have to study paragraph 44 in connection with that. We cannot do that. Let us read, then, paragraph 86, the second part.

Student: "Nor should this cause surprise when the chronologists themselves vary as much as four hundred and sixty years dating Homer, the author nearest to these affairs of the Greeks."

Strauss: You see, he regarded 1500 years as a trivial difference in the case of Eusebius and Philo. Go on.

Student: "Our reason is that in magnificence and delicacy Syracuse, . . . when it had once had a population of several million."

Strauss: Now he uses atrocious figures himself. There is, of course, no evidence for such figures in Livy or anyone else. Now the beginning of paragraph 88.

Student: "But just as the clouds are dispersed by the sun . . . and did not extend her empire more than twenty miles."

Strauss: In other words, here and there we get reports which show the smallness of the ancient things. I mean in the light of these small numbers we have a criterion for dismissing the large figures - especially if we know the tendency of people to make bigger and the unknown, and that making bigger is due to fear. So in case of doubt - what are the data regarding the battle of the Persians?

Student: Something like two million.

Strauss: And what do they now say they were?

Student: Eighty thousand.

Strauss: Eighty thousand. Yes. So this business, of course, is apt to be brought out in modern studies, i.e. the reduction of the very big figures. Whether the explanation of these big figures given by Vico is a sound one does not matter, but the fact is now generally accepted. That doesn't make it true, by the way, but it shows the historical success of Vico.

All these remarks here deal with the absolutely unreliable character of early chronology. Well, we cannot go into that.

Let us see one thing of somewhat broader importance. Paragraph 92. No, let us read first paragraph 91.

Student: "Aesop, vulgar moral philosopher."

Strauss: I.e., not the true philosopher.

Student: "In the section on Poetic Logic it will be found that Aesop was not an individual man in nature, but an imaginative type or poetic character of the socii or famuli of the heroes, who certainly came before the Seven Sages of Greece."

Strauss: You see this is the point: to recognize that these early individuals before reason was developed, are not individuals, but types, poetic characters. That is one key point. And those of you who know something of the history of Old Testament criticism in the 19th century will know that the same was done with the Old Testament persons. Some of the twelve sons of Jacob - these are simply poetic indications of the type as such, the allegedly poetic ancestor. The same was even applied to the patriarchs. Today they have changed in this particular case.

This principle was, I think, first stated by Vico. That individuals spoken of by early men are not necessarily real individual. That is negative, but is, however, a negative which is perfectly defensible.

Now the next paragraph.

Student: "Thales began with too simple a principle: water, perhaps because he had seen gourds grow in water."

Strauss: What is the meaning of this simple remark? Because this remark stems, so to speak, straight from 's Metaphysics, Book I. But what is the meaning of this remark here? This is a characteristic early thinking, very simplistic. But if you find the wisdom of Plato in a text allegedly written in Vichy 3,000 B.C., you know this can't be right.

In the next passage he refers to a passage in Livy - what Livy says about Pythagoras. Livy was, on the whole, quite sober, just as Aristotle was. And we see sober men of the past - Romans and Greeks - and Vico is in agreement. In a way he does nothing more than try to restore that sobriety. To that extent there is no originality.

Paragraph 94. Yes. This is worth reading.

Student: "Need we go so far as to appeal here to the authority of Lactantius, who firmly denies that Pythagoras was the disciple of Isaih?"

Strauss: You see, that is a part of the traditional law. Since the Jews are the elected people, all law is of Jewish origin. Therefore, Pythagoras and, needless to say, Plato too, must have been indirectly pupils of Moses or of the Hebrew fathers. Yes?

the Hebrews in the times of Homer and Pythagoras lived unknown to their nearest inland neighbors, to say nothing of remote nations overseas."

- Strauss: Let us seek this immediate sequel and go on to where he again refers to Josephus.

Student: "Josephus himself freely admits . . ."

Strauss: Freely should read "generously." It is an act of a generous man to do that. In other words, had he not been generous he would have claimed the Jewish origin of Greek wisdom.

Student: "admits their obscurity and gives these reasons for it: 'We do not live,' he says, 'on the seashore, nor do we delight in trading or in having dealings with foreigners for the sake of trade.'"

Strauss: So there is no doubt that Josephus actually said it because it is literally quoted from Josephus in the Italian translation. So there is, then, no Jewish origin of Greek wisdom. Hence the wisdom of the gentiles must be understood as having come into being out of a state of bestiality. Otherwise, if gentile history is only the corrupted Jewish history, then that is an explanation. The other explanation is the explanation of the gentiles themselves. Since the gentiles admittedly started from a bestial beginning, then the task of the historian, or the trainer, is to see how these almost beast-like men have developed so that they are capable of the high wisdom of the Greeks.

The Jews lived in complete isolation as Josephus generously grants, hence, on the basis of what we had discussed before, the Biblical chronology must be utterly unreliable. I mean, if this argument of paragraph 83 is valid.

Then, in paragraph 95 - I think this you should read again.

Student: "But by the nature of these civil things . . . recent mythologists, who believe that the fables are sacred stories corrupted by the gentile nations and especially by the Greeks."

Strauss: Let us stop here. Now what about this "luminous proof" of the truth of the Christian religion? How does the proof run? The greatest gentile philosopher found out that part of the Christian teaching (inaudible) Hence, this teaching is not merely known by the relation, but also This, I believe, is what he means by the proof. But it has, of course, another side to it. To assert that the pagans did not learn anything from the Jews And on the other hand, of course, it has also this meaning. That the wisdom of the gentiles could not have come from the Jews because the Jews lived in complete isolation. They did not mingle with the gentiles at all, and they were than - that's the other one - than the Egyptians who, compared with the Jews (that's my interpretation) were most humane (meaning most hospitable), and yet they were quite inhospitable. The Jews, still more inhospitable. But, of course, whatever the ancient gentile's

remarks about the Jews, surely the notion that the majority of the Jews around were idolators, worshipping abominations, surely affected the Jew's hospitality or inhospitality. There is no question about it.

Lecture VIVico: The New Science, October 16, 1963

Now, Mr. \_\_\_\_\_, you wrote a very interesting paper on Churchill. This is a more difficult subject than Churchill. I would like to take out a few points. You began by speaking about the relation to Bacon and you quoted something from Vico, or was it not from Vico?

Student: Yes. (Inaudible)

Strauss: It is from Vico himself? Where?

Student: Paragraph 164.

Strauss: I see. Thank you very much. That is, I think, defensive. I don't remember where I formed this opinion, but I was sure in my mind that what Bacon does is not simply to reject modern natural science, but to extend it in the spirit. This is somewhat contrary to the interpretation given by Croce more or less, where this version is entirely new and not related - I mean entirely polemical to natural science and not a continuum. The kinship between modern history - the natural scientific history - and Baconian science was stated very powerfully by Collingwood in his Idea of History. I mean one may have doubts regarding other aspects of Collingwood, but this is a very interesting statement which you can easily find by looking at the index of Collingwood's book, The Idea of History. This was the first point.

Regarding the distinction between the truth and the certain, I have read all kinds of things in Croce and other writers, and what I found in reading Vico is something very different. Now what Croce says may be based on the other writings of Vico, for all I know. I cannot say where. As you stated it, it means that Vico tries to bring about a coincidence of the true and the certain. Whether we can leave it at that I do not yet know, but that there is such a thing going on in the modern world is true. We only have to say it slightly differently. In the older scheme, say Plato and Aristotle, one can say that there is the best regime in Plato and Aristotle, contrary to what the textbooks say, it is not different in itself in Aristotle as it is in Plato. That the content of the best regime differs in Aristotle from Plato is true, but the structure - the place - is the same. And here are all the actual societies. All kinds - better and worse. There is no necessity for the ideal every becoming actual. It must be possible, but there is no necessity that it become actual.

This is the starting point of Machiavelli's critique. He simply says, 'Well, if it is essentially not actual and not bound to be actual, then it is an imaginary commonwealth. We want to have a commonwealth as our model the actuality of which is assured. And how does one assure it? Answer, by lowering it. If we have one which is not here, but here (illustration on blackboard), the chances are much greater. This is exactly what men like Machiavelli and Hobbes and Locke are trying to do. And utilitarianism as well, because the true utilitarian teaching was never actualized, but it seemed to be so easy to appeal to the utility of the greatest number, you only have to get a democracy and the greatest number will get its utility. It's very simple. Infinitely more simple

than the perfect gentlemen of whom Plato and Aristotle dreamt. But now there is another, more advanced stage of this thing. And this says, "Of course the ideal is, in itself, radically different from reality - the ought from the is. Kant is the most famous exponent of this view. But there is an intrinsic necessity for conversion. Here is the idea. Men's selfish passions work in such a way that they gradually meet actual death. Wars become ever more costly as the world becomes ever more one world. This is already Kant, although you will read it in everyday papers. But this was once a terrific thing. So that men do not have to undergo a moral conversion. The situation changes; the institutions change. So when you have nuclear wars, wars cease to be profitable, and only a madman would wage war. And this simple premises, not to act like a madman - I mean, even Khrushchev has this. So that you don't need for that any conversion, any moral conversion.

In a weighty, more sophisticated manner, what Kant stated was then done by Hegel so that the final stage of the historical process, which comes by necessity, is one in which the rational is actual, as Hegel put it, and the actual is rational. And, according to Mr. Vico's suggestion - which we will have to examine - this is already implied in Vico's assertion of the coincidence of the true and the certain. Something like that. But we will have to examine it. I am not yet convinced of it.

Now, when you quoted this axiom, "The order of ideas is the same as the order of institutions," here is a matter of translation. Because the original Italian uses a much vaguer term than "institution" - things. "The order of ideas is the same as the order of things." Now the "things" really mean, in fact in Vico, institutions." That does not do away with that broader meaning. Do you know where this formula extends from? "The order of ideas is the same as the order of things" comes from Spinoza. A well-known proposition taken from Spinoza. Spinoza plays altogether a very great role for Vico, although the references to him are all polemical. But that is not necessarily decisive. You see, Spinoza had a very bad name. No one could quote him. I think the first time he was - his character was praised by some people. That was barely permissible because he was not particularly and this was interpreted as a kind of in the 18th century. They must have had a very funny morality. Spinoza was spoken of with respect for the first time in 1785. He was absolutely in the dog house. And, in a way, Hobbes too. But Hobbes was earlier acceptable because Hobbes had taught the absolute monarchy. This, needless to say, was a teaching acceptable not to the theologians, but to the other advisors of absolute kings for reasons which I don't have to explain. So Hobbes and Spinoza were not fashionable.

Now for the other point which you mentioned, "Man is by nature social." Vico says that, but you saw that Vico doesn't mean by it the same thing as other scholars meant by it. This was long ago done by Spinoza. Spinoza starts from the selfish individual, even more so than Hobbes, we would say. And yet, by a necessary mechanism, man becomes social. And the mechanism in Spinoza - I do not know if they have found any traces of that in Vico yet. Spinoza stated it this way: There is something like that which Hume later on calls "association of ideas," and what Spinoza calls "the imitation of effects." In other words, if I desire A, then,

of course, for this very reason I am a competitor with everyone else who desires A, no holds barred. But it is also possible that my love for A - say an apple - may by an association of ideas cast a positive light on the other man who likes the apple. Associate, you know, my like and his like. And, now this imitation of effects, this association of ideas, assimilates men to each other and therefore brings about a kind of sociality. But there is, of course, the greatest difference between sociality brought about by a blind mechanism, and natural sociality. And this, I believe, is of some importance for the understanding of Vico, although I believe that this particular argument does not occur in Vico.

Another point which we should mention where Vico is also indebted to Spinoza and to Hobbes is this: Spinoza's criticism of Hobbes, which is this: Hobbes had made the famous distinction between the state of nature and the civil state. This means, then, that once man has entered society, the state of nature is out. Spinoza says, "No, the state of nature is never out. It is only modified by the establishment of civil society. It is still the state of nature." I.e., the natural laws which determine man's actions are the same in the civil state and the state of nature, only modified by the existence of the institutions. So, in other words, instead of fearing anyone who passes in the street - which is no longer an issue - you fear the policeman, ultimately the gallows. But this is only a modification of the effects, the passions, not an elimination.

And this, I think, is also in Vico. The state of nature, we can say, is the state where man is determined by his natural emotions and so on. In this sense the state of nature remains intact.

Now let us then turn to several arguments. How we can manage I do not know. This is a very long and difficult chapter. We may have to carry over from now on until we come to a section which does not contain so much of such great importance.

Now let me remind you of a very important point which I made last time. There is a very important statement of Vico which, while it may have been stated more coherently at least at first glance than it was ever stated before, is in itself in no way noted. That is the notion of a strictly critical history. Critical history as no explanation in terms of marvelous, miraculous events, and where instead everything happens naturally. Thucydides is the most famous exponent. This goes together with a view that the beginnings of man were very imperfect. Now this overall schema is not only in Thucydides. We have it also in Plato in the Laws, and you find it even, to some extent, in Cicero. But Vico may have stated this more coherently than anyone before him. This, however, means it is not an essential change and we are, of course, concerned primarily with the central changes.

Now at the beginning of this section on the Elements, paragraph 119, Vico states the theme. He looks for those axioms which will give form to the matter supplied by history. That was the question we discussed last time. I think Mr. \_\_\_\_\_ brought that up. How does he have the criterion for distinguishing between true fables and untrue fables, i.e. fables which have some historical sense and fables which do not. Now what is first? Let us read paragraph 120.

Student: "Because of the indefinite nature of the human mind, wherever it is lost in ignorance, man makes himself the measure of all things."

Strauss: The rule of the universe. This we have already seen before in paragraphs 48 and 50, but it now takes on here a higher status because it is now explicitly made the first axiom. He is here silent about the more specific reason, i.e. the link between the infinite nature of the human mind for making itself the root of the universe. That link is, as we saw last time, fear. The unknown is aggrandized, made bigger than it is, i.e. within a way supposed to be known. If I say that the cause of this earthquake, or whatever it may be, is some god, then while I do not know it, I assert to it a higher cause than it is, than the merely natural cause. Fear is, then, the decisive link. Now fear, as we all know, is a passion. It has to do not so much with man's intellectual life as with the life of the spirit. In other words, a certain kind of will is the cause of the most fundamental error. Have you ever heard of such a thing? I mean something of which we are reminded by Vico? Well, one of the most famous theories of error is that of Descartes, and that was very well known to Vico. Descartes gives this reason for error: man's intellect is finite, but his will is infinite. Regarding his will, man is equal to God, only without his intellect. Therefore, since his will extends infinitely beyond the boundaries of the intellect he can assent, to things which he does not know. In other words, fear is only a more specific form of will which confuses the . I have a reference here to paragraph 137 which deals with this matter.

Student: "Men who do not know the truth of things try to reach certainty about them, so that, if they cannot satisfy their intellects by science, their wills at least may rest on conscience."

Strauss: You see, this has to do with the will in contradistinction to the intellect. This also underlines the distinction between the true and the certain to which we will come later.

There is so much here, but we must be a bit choosy. At the end of paragraph 123 he speaks of the natural beginning of humanity. Therefore, man had to be by nature a small, crude and most obscure. He proceeds in a somewhat strange way. He begins simply. And, then later on, in paragraph 163 he gives a surprise so we have first to work very hard and then we are rewarded or punished, as the case may be, by his authentic presentation of what the structure of the argument is. But even without that we can see that up to paragraph 128 he deals with error. Error precedes truth. That is the idea. We begin with error. And then, in paragraph 129, as indicated by the first word up through paragraph 133 he deals with Spinoza. Philosophy as the pursuit of replacing error by truth. Now Vico admits here the need of philosophy. Sure. If he wants to have a new science - and science and philosophy were not so distinguished as they are now - it is obvious. But, and this is the key point, philosophy must be political, not monastic, i.e. not a guidance for the individual as individual. The argument can be stated as follows: The philosopher cannot be political. Paragraph 131.



Student: "Philosophy considers man as he should be"

Strauss: As he ought to be.

Student: "And so can be of service to but very few, who wish to live in the Republic of Plato, not to fall back into the dregs of Romulus."

Strauss: The latter is a phrase coined by Cicero, but the thought is the first chapter of Spinoza's Political Treatise - an elaborate commentary on the thought. This means that philosophers cannot be political because their way of life is the preserve of a tiny minority. Philosophy teaches how one ought to live only to very few, i.e. philosophy is essentially monastic in his sense of the word, a hermit's way of life. But philosophy requires a political supplement because, of course, we must say something about how the non-philosophers must live. Philosophy as universal wisdom must speak about that, too. Now this political supplement to philosophy is derivative from the teaching of the legislators because they are the fellows who have taken care throughout the ages of making life bearable for the non-philosophers. Again, Spinoza, Chapter 1. The politicians, as he puts it, are very shrewd fellows, very astute fellows. They knew how to manage the multitude. And what the philosopher must do is simply to see what these politicians have devised, and then deduce these devices from human nature which the legislators, of course, did not do. They played by ear and discovered by sheer experience. The philosopher will give the reason, but he will not discover, as it were, new devices. That is part of what Mr. \_\_\_\_\_ said, but it is not quite the same for the very simple reason that Spinoza still presents, believe it or not, a normative political teaching, i.e. by looking at these devices and deducing them from human nature, he sees that not all these devices are good. I mean, that you can combine them in a different way than they were ever combined by any legislator and therefore Spinoza has this special teaching, the optima forma republica, the best form of the commonwealth.

The characteristic thing about Vico is that he seems to be even less normative than Spinoza. That his new science and this new political philosophy is, apparently, purely theoretical. It looks at what has been done by legislators throughout the ages. Whether this is true, of course, we do not know. We can also state it as follows: Philosophy deals - apart from its other subjects - with the philosophic life and with the life of the vulgar. That would be the older distinction. And the latter, of course, is of political philosophy proper. Now the life of the vulgar, if we follow the Platonic distinction, are the human virtues. Human in the sense of human origin. And the others, the divine virtues. But what are the human virtues in the sense of the older human virtues? Aren't they the socially useful vices? Whereas the other vices have to be taught. So this is, I believe, the connection between these two parts. Paragraph 133.

Student: "This axiom proves that there is divine providence and further that it is a divine legislative mind. For out of the passions of men each bent on his private advantage, for the sake of which they would live like wild beasts in the wilderness, it has made the civil orders by which they may live in human society."

Strauss: In other words, what we have seen already before, but which we must surely keep in mind. Private and strictly selfish vices or passions lead to civil felicity. This proves providence. Now as is made clear in the next paragraph - please read it.

Student: "Things do not settle or endure out of their natural order?"

Strauss: Which implies this process whereby the strictly selfish passions lead to civil felicity, and that it is a strictly natural process. And it proves by its naturalness divine providence.

Now, in the next paragraph - we cannot read everything - man is by nature social. Thus he says that his asocial or antisocial passions make him social through a natural necessity. Hence there is natural right, right being something relating to an order of society. And if society is natural there will be a natural right. This is Vico's conception of natural right. In a way he accepts but he radically interprets it because he radically interprets man's sociality. Because man's natural sociality is passion bright or produced by a mechanism the natural right must be different from other (inaudible)

In paragraph 137 he makes the distinction between the true and the certain. Now let me put this on the blackboard so we keep this in mind as a problem which we have thought. Here is philosophy, the truth. Here is non-philosophy, however we may define it later, which leads to the certain. And this has to do with the intellect, and this has to do with the will. It is very interesting what he calls the certain. I mean if we speak of the truth, it's truth not to the intellect. And what do they traditionally say belongs to the real, as distinguished from the true? The (inaudible) and the intellect. And what belongs to the will?

Student: Opinion?

Strauss: No. The bonum, the good. That is only another statement of the \_\_\_\_\_. Why does Vico replace the good by the certain? Because this is surely very strange. Now let us see. Let us read first the next paragraph.

Student: "Philosophy contemplates reason, whence comes knowledge of the true"

Strauss: "Science" of the true.

Student: "Science of the true; philosophy observes the authority of human choice, whence comes consciousness of the certain."

Strauss: Yes, conscientia which means also conscience. Is that not so? So this ambiguity we must remark. That science and conscience are different things we all understand. Then there is philosophy and philology. We today would say that philosophy deals with the reason and philology observes facts. But Vico does not say "fact," He says it observes the authority of human arbitrement. Now what does he mean by that? Now first we can say that certain is the fact without reason. I mean we find a wound, a shot wound?

Student: A bullet wound.

Strauss: A bullet wound. So we know he was either suicide or murder. That's clear. This is a fact, and we don't doubt the fact for one moment. Certain. But we are dissatisfied with the situation because we do not know who did it. And this would be the cause or the reason. You understand that. Now these crude facts, the understood facts are here somehow identified with authority. Does this make sense? I mean not this planned fact of the killed man. But how can a man come to use crude fact synonymously with authority? What does authority do? I mean mere authority as authority.

Student: inaudible

Strauss: Yes, but there is a nice word which is used up to the present day even by social scientists. The fiat of the legislator. So, in other words, the merely authoritative does have the character of the mere crude fact. This is, I think, the link between these two things. This authoritative decision can only be taken cognizance of, it can only be observed. But philosophy can't leave it at that just as little as in the case of the corpse here. Not here, here. I say this out of superstition as it's regarded as a bad omen. The philosophers have to explain that. They have to explain that decision. The law is laid down that a man may have four, but not more than four, wives unless he's a king. There is some law, I believe that says that. This is a fact. Why did that legislator arrange it this way? That goes beyond what the lawyer of that law could solve. That would be a philosophic question. We see here one distinction which, I believe, is very important regardless of whether Vico meant it or not. I believe he meant it, but I don't know. "Certainty" is here an ambiguous term. Namely, in the first place, this certainty of the fact by the observer who sees this strange law, and which certainty is transformed into truth by understanding the reason. Then it is not merely the certainty of fact, but then it is understood as truth.

But there is another aspect of that certainty, and that is of the people subject to the law. Not the observers, not the philosophers. They become certain, subjectively certain as Hegel called it, that this is the right thing to do. Their doubt - if they had been capable of doubt - their doubt how shall we act in this matter, has been settled by the fiat of the legislator. They have been made certain. This explains why here he refers to the conscience. This conscience does not enter as far as the mere observer and the scientific or philosophic explainer is concerned, but is, of course, crucial for the people subject to the law. I think we must keep this distinction in mind because it may very well be important for the sequel if only in that form that Vico should not have reflected on it, which I doubt.

Let us first raise this question: How can there be certainty of the people in question regarding things which depend on arbitrary decisions? But let us lay that aside for awhile. Of course, people may simply be afraid of punishment, but as long as there is mere fear there is not, of course, certainty. How can they have certainty regarding things which depend entirely on arbitrary decisions? Paragraph 141.

Student: "Human choice, by its nature most uncertain, is made certain and determined by the common sense of men with respect to human needs or utilities, which are the two origins of the natural law of nations."

Strauss: Of the right order. Right not wrong. Alright. This is a very important source of the term "common sense". "Common sense" stems in one sense from Aristotle's De Anima. It is the sense in which the various senses are united. Someone can say, "This is hot and very tasty." That I cannot know merely by touch and taste. There must be some union of the senses - that's the "common sense." The origin of the term, as far as I know, is Cicero. Something to check by you, Mr. \_\_\_\_\_. And it is kind of equivalent to what Aristotle calls "prudence," a common sense of the right and decent. I also do not know from my own knowledge that around 1700 the word "common sense" comes into vogue which it never had before thanks to Shaftesbury, a famous British writer. And the late Aaronson wanted to study that. Someone else should take up this study which has the advantage that one doesn't have to know any language except English to study Shaftesbury, although Cicero is not, unfortunately, an English writer. Now Shaftesbury was in Naples around 1700, and this seems to be a fact that there was some interest of Vico in what later came to be called the Scotch school of common sense derivative from Shaftesbury. So this is of some historical importance. I mention this only in passing.

We will turn to Mr. \_\_\_\_\_'s question. There is a common sense of man regarding what is necessary or useful to man. Let me first finish this. One moment. And this leads to the natural right of gentiles because there is a common sense, or agreement, among all men, and this is the source, or the root, of the certainty which people have all over the world regarding the rightness of their customs. Yes?

Student: I'm confused about this whole distinction between the making certain and Descartes' ideas.

Strauss: For Descartes one can say that the certain is identical with the true, and not distinguished from the true.

Student: Well, the fundamental hypotheses of natural science might prove to be arbitrary.

Strauss: Yes, that appears now or, say, late 19th century, but in Descartes' time the laws of nature were, of course, not arbitrary. The laws of nature were not hypothetical. They were unhypothetical, certain or true. For Descartes the true and the certain is the clear and distinct idea. You know that. And a great difficulty regarding this point exists, but Descartes does not recognize as certain, i.e. something certain, different from the true. Mr. \_\_\_\_\_?

Student: inevidible

Strauss: They are by no means clear. Naturally. We are only at the beginning. We get only gradually clearer formulations of the problem. And perhaps after we have reached the clearest and fullest statement of the problem, we will have the solution. But for the time being we surely don't have that.

Let me restate the results of these remarks here, especially of paragraph 141 and paragraph 142. Natural necessity is accepted in early men, and makes them, therefore, certain of these most elemental institutions which they adopted be it matrimony or paternal authority or whatever.

Let us turn to paragraph 144.

Student: "Uniform ideas originating among entire peoples unknown to each other must have a common ground of truth."

Strauss: Of "truth," not merely of certainty. Ideas common to nations ignorant of one another must have an element of truth, i.e. they show to the philologist or the philosopher their basically true origin. That's something entirely different. Here we are not concerned with what these people were certain of, but we want to find out what happened there, and as such we are concerned not with the certain, but with the true.

Paragraph 145.

Student: "This axiom is a great principle which establishes the common sense of the human race as the criterion taught to the nations by divine providence to define what is certain in the natural law of nations."

Strauss: You see, here he speaks again of the certain. Yes?

Student: "And the nations reach this certainty by recognizing the underlying agreements which, despite variations of detail, obtain among them all in respect of this right. Thence issues the mental dictionary for assigning origins to all the divers articulated languages."

Strauss: And so on. Let us stop here for one moment. The certainty of the natural right of nations due to the common sense is very questionable. The certainty as distinguished from the truth. One reason is given in the next paragraph.

Student: "This same axiom does away with all the ideas hitherto . . . It was this error that gave rise to the fiction that the Law of the Twelve Tables came to Rome from Greece."

Strauss: We will hear of that ad nauseum.

Student: "If that had been the case, it would have been a civil law . . . it came to be recognized as common to the entire human race."

Strauss: In other words, if I understand it correctly, it is the essence of the natural right as natural to emerge in each nation independently of any knowledge of any other nation. But I think that what he means by this is that therefore there cannot be, generally, certainty among the people themselves regarding natural right because they do not know of these others. In other words, only the observer-philologist-philosopher can recognize it as natural. The people themselves could not know it was natural because for them it was simply handed down from their ancestors.

Now, paragraph 147.

Student: "The nature of things is nothing but their coming into being"

Strauss: Here it is translated as "things." He should always translate it this way. Yes?

Student: "at certain times and in certain fashions. Whenever the time and fashion is thus and so, such an not otherwise are the things that come into being."

Strauss: Yes. What does this mean? The nature of a thing is how it was in its origin because this origin explains any later stage. Does he mean that? The acorn explains the oak. Does he mean that? It is not necessary to have ever seen an oak, but if you have a complete knowledge of the acorn - microscopic and otherwise - you would know that it can become an oak and only an oak. If he means that he is very brave. Because matrimony, as he has already alluded, will be explained as superstitious fear. Monogamy. Is, then, this superstitious origin of matrimony the reason for the sacredness of matrimony? That would be the great implication if the origin gives the thing its character. The alternative would be that whatever people in the early stage may have thought about an institution they have formed, there may be something effective in that of which they were unaware and which was the true reason. Is this intelligible? I mean, whatever went on in the heads of very savage and primitive peoples when they established an institution, this would not necessarily be the true reason unknown to them, but effective in what they did. But if what was in their heads at that time was the reason then, of course, if this reason was very weak and poor, the whole institution will prove to be base later. I don't remember that. Freud gives a very strange explanation of the early band of men. There was only one woman and then the brothers killed the father. Has any one of you read that? I read it once. It sounds very implausible to me.

At any rate, where does this lead to? I forgot that. But, you know, an event which took place - well, of course, it never actually took place, but was only postulated. An event which was believed to have taken place on the basis of all kinds of fantastic assumptions - its use for understanding present day institutions and the validity and soundness of these institutions is supposed to depend still on these savage reasons. It is not yet clear whether Vico means it in this way, but there is a certain suspicion that he must mean it this way.

Student: inaudible

Strauss: The origins are obscure, but once he applies this engine of the new science they will no longer be obscure. The obscurity is removed by the new science, so that is why this is not right.

Let us see paragraph 153.

Student: "This axiom assures us that the weightiest philological proofs . . . since it retains this same property possessed by the ancient Roman language."

Strauss: Namely, to be a mother language like Greek and Latin, but not like French, Spanish, Italian and, to some extent, English. You see, an implication, of course, is this: Not all languages go

through the normal growth that Greek did. And if not all languages, says Vico, then not all people. This is of great importance regarding the eternal, universal history. It is not universally valid. That becomes clear more and more. In paragraph 158, for example, we hear of the peculiarity of the Greeks. The Greeks are the nation of philosophers. We have spoken about this subject before.

Paragraph 159, a very long paragraph, I will state the main point. In France you have the coincidence of scholastic theology and heroic fables, the medieval stories of children. That is to say, heroic fables belong to the heroic age. Scholastic theology belongs to the later age, but in France these two things belonging to two different ages happened to take place in the same age. You see how little eternal the eternal history is.

In paragraph 160 he speaks of the peculiarity of Rome. The peculiarity of Rome - I mean what distinguishes them from other nations. Perhaps you should read that.

Student: "But as we further meditated this work . . . the asylum which Livy defines generally as 'an old counsel of founders of cities.'"

Strauss: Also one of the eternally requested passages by Vico.

Student: "for since violence still reigned he naturally . . . Thus ancient Roman history will be found to be a continuous mythology of the heroic history of the Greeks."

Strauss: So you see there is never, or very rarely, a simple uniformity in the development of nations. The difference between Rome and Greece here.

Paragraph 163 is very long, but let us read the beginning of it.

Student: "Of all the aforesaid propositions, the first, second, third and fourth give us the basis for refuting all opinions hitherto held about the beginnings of humanity. The refutations turn on the improbabilities, absurdities, contradictions and impossibilities of these opinions."

Strauss: Mr. \_\_\_\_\_. Your question of last time is simply answered now, isn't it? For the criterion. I mean whether the axioms are true or false is not our question. But he has failed your question. Yes?

Student: "The subsequent propositions, from the fifth to the fifteenth . . . The last propositions, from the fifteenth to the twenty-second, will give us the basis of certitude."

Strauss: Of the certitude in contradistinction to the truth. Yes?

Student: "By their use we shall be able to see in fact this world of nations which we have studied in idea, following the method of philosophizing made most certain by Francis Bacon, Lord of Verulam, but carrying it over from the things of nature, on which he composed his book Cogitata et visa, to the civil affairs of mankind."

Strauss: Now this last passage was the one referred to by Mr. \_\_\_\_\_ in his paper. You see here the ideal history of this world of nations is something different from the factual world of the nations. It's certain. We have had so many examples of that. You know, the peculiarities of the various nations, that we do not have to dwell on that. Here "ideal" takes on the meaning of the constructed. Not the Platonic meaning, but the modern meaning of "ideal" as constructed. In other words, we make a construction on the basis of what we know in general of human nature. And then, like a modern scientist having a primary theory or hypothesis, we apply them to the facts and modifies them. So, then, the eternal ideal of history is more hypothetical than strictly speaking true. Someone wanted to raise a question?

Student: (inaudible) reference to paragraph 157. It seems that when you ask why he said that, that he therefore implies that all the preceding axioms are demonstrations of what he said before and I question that.

Strauss: In other words, if I understand you correctly, what I said seems to be contradictory by the fact that he calls these "axioms," and that he clearly means in the older language non-hypothetical assertions. Is this what you mean? Very well. Then we must make a distinction. What he said about man's beginning is, of course, meant to be finally right. That's not hypothetical. But if you come to such a thing like the three ages - age of the gods, age of heroes, age of men - or the three languages, I ask you a very simple question: Where did he get that from? How did he get these three ages?

Student: He says it corresponds to what the Egyptians said.

Strauss: Yes, he got it from the Egyptians. Excuse me. After we have become so enlightened by Senior Vico what is the value of the notions of these half-barbaric Egyptians? In other words, that can very well be a provisional, plausible suggestion which has some value and needs many, many corrections to be true. This he does not have to say to us of the true axioms like the one about the infinity of the human mind and its proneness to errors of difficult nature and so on.

Student: Am I being too difficult when I say that it seems that one could pose contradictory axioms to those that he has put down (inaudible)

Strauss: No, you never could according to Vico. That is very simple. He indicates this in what he says at the beginning. At the beginning of paragraph 163. He would say, "Try it the other way around. Try it by its human perfect beginnings. And that was the pagan fables all decayed original, say Jewish wisdom." You will find confusion by starting from the opposite thesis. The approach is really similar to that of Spinoza and (inaudible) Still, Spinoza begins with axioms. The most simple example is the one here. These axioms are rarely doubtful. Some of them at least, are actually doubtful. How can he use them? That appears only much later in \_\_\_\_\_. These are, to begin with in Spinoza, mere hypotheses in fact, but hypotheses leading to a clear and distinct account of the whole. The alternative axioms would lead to a confused account of the whole. Ergo, that's the proof. Now, of course, it may indubitably be that a clear account of the



whole is not possible. That was the simple objection made already by Descartes about the clear and distinct ideas. The clear and distinct idea is not necessarily the true idea. In other words, if this is an idea (blackboard illustration), this part might be wholly dark, and there may be only half an inch that isn't. That is the clear and distinct part. Say that is the whole idea. Convenient, but not evidently sound.'

Student: Alright. Now, if I understand you correctly you agree with that principle that it is definitely convenient, and yet we don't know definitely whether it is sound.

Strauss: Sure. It was victorious for quite some time. This patrician schema. But the difficulties came out more and more, and today they are admitted by the very successors to the heroes of the 17th century. They are no longer heroes. There are too many of them to be heroes, but they have admitted in their way that the basis is hypothetical of natural science.

Wico: The New Science, October 21, 1963

We have not finished our discussion of the Elements and we must, therefore, return to it. There is only one - no, two points. "Whatever is, is right." You quoted. Who said that?

Student: Spinoza?

Strauss: No. I happen to know that by some accident. Alexander Pope. This world is the best of all possible worlds which doesn't exclude evil. So that is different. But then Pope brought out his proof and he was accused of have stolen from Leibniz, and so we were reminded of Leibniz and there is something to that. In other words, Leibniz's position was called optimism. That is the original meaning of optimism which is now used by everyone on all kinds of occasions without in any way implying the best of all possible worlds. If a man thinks that the recession, if it comes, will not be too bad, he is an optimist. Originally it had a very strict meaning: this world is the best of all possible worlds. What is wrong with that? Given the theistic tenets from which Leibniz argues must this not be the best of all possible worlds?

Student: If God were perfectly concerned with man and perfectly good, and perfectly omniscient (inaudible)  
That is to say, however perfect God may be, he would not be able to construct a hierarchy of good such that all could be actualized simultaneously without a partial limitation.

Strauss: What you stated was somewhat complicated. I didn't quite follow it. The key point, I believe, was that Leibniz's doctrine denies God's freedom proper because he was compelled by his goodness to choose the best of all possible worlds.

Student: That was my point. If there was another, imaginary possibility, was God compelled?

Strauss: Yes, but the compulsion was through the goodness. I will give you another example which shows you the difficulty, a simpler example. When Leibniz discusses the objection, how is this doctrine compatible with the traditional Christian teaching of original sin? His answer was this: The universe is infinite. The whole drama of fall and redemption takes place on a single planet in an infinite universe. The rest of the universe is free from original sin. So things are not so bad. Original sin is only on this single planet. This was one way in which he tried to get out of his difficulty

Student: inaudible

Strauss: No. This notion of an original intellect is not the creation of Leibniz, but is older. I do not know where it stems from. Surely Locke's immediate authority when he was young was Leibniz. There is no question about that, but this teaching is not original to Leibniz.

Now there was another point - the translation of conscientia. Mr. \_\_\_\_\_, it means both, doesn't it?

Student: Yes.

Strauss: And the original meaning is, of course, conscience. I think in French it is the same. \_\_\_\_\_, scientific consciousness. But I would translate it in an older text ruthlessly by "conscience," and try to understand how "conscience" came to be "consciousness." In other words, "consciousness" is "is con knowledge, you do something and you are aware that you do it. And, of course, the primary meaning is in a conspiracy, for example, or any affair of this kind. There are so many \_\_\_\_\_, fellow knowers about this occasion. But the concept of "consciousness" is a very complicated philosophic concept, and one should not start from it. One should rather try to understand how it emerged. In the 19th century it was a very elementary term and even already in the late 18th century. Kant, for example. And yet there were philosophers for millenia who knew nothing of the consciousness. It's a very great problem how the soul was replaced by the consciousness.

"Conscience" has a more limited meaning. It refers especially to man's judgement and so on about his actions from the point of view of sin or non-sin.

Student: It seems to be - especially in the 19th century - that it's not really knowledge, at least in the sense that one knows seat. There seems to be something mysterious about the awareness.

Strauss: It goes back somehow - although that is not a sufficient explanation - to Descartes. You know Descartes abolished the soul by dividing it into consciousness, let us say - the idea or cogitation was his word - and other things, the vegetable and animal soul - life, just simple mechanical motion. This - the Cartesian split - is the basis of the concept, but "consciousness" is the child of Descartes' concept of cogitation. In a sense, cogitation was originally one particular kind of having something in one's mind. Descartes uses it for everything. The other side of it is the idea, as Descartes uses it. Any object of the consciousness as such is called an idea by Descartes, and that is taken over by Locke and the others.

But old Hobbes, who still lived with one foot in the 16th century, did not adopt that. Hobbes never uses such a simple term for the ideas. He says, thoughts and passions. Thoughts are what would be regarded as the ideas, but passions, of course, would also be ideas in Descartes' sense. But Hobbes denies that. He cannot bring himself to admit that this forms a unity on this new basis. That is a doubt process, but we will come to another doubt process very soon. Yes?

Student: irreducible

Strauss: It does not yet have this teleological rigor of Marxism. Yes. I believe that.

Now I think we have to start first with that very important passage where we stopped last time. Paragraph 292 where we find the notion of a natural royal law. And then, developing that in the following paragraph, we reach the conclusion that the ideal eternal history with which Vico is concerned is, in fact, the totality of natural laws regarding the course of political life and each of its stages. For example, that you have first this

half aristocracy and the structure of this half aristocracy. Then the transition of this, say, to democracy and the structure of democracy. The transition to monarchy. The structure of monarchy. This is one matter of utmost importance. Did we go beyond that last time? No. I'm very sorry. No, I think this was the point. Let us start from there.

What is this concept of laws of nature? We must reflect on that for one moment. You know, in present day social science they do not normally speak of natural laws, but what they mean are natural laws - laws of behavior. It would be interesting to find out why they do not any longer call them natural laws, apparently limiting natural laws to physics and, I suppose, chemistry and biology. Would genetic laws be called natural laws in ordinary usage? I do not know. I ask you. The Mendelian laws. Are they normally referred to as natural laws? Or is this change due to the fact that statistical laws are not called natural? I simply do not know. Yes?

Student: Aren't they talking about crude hypotheses rather than laws?

Strauss: Yes, but not invariably. Sometimes they speak of correlations. You know, correlations would mean a number of series of variables and all kinds of things. But when they speak simply, without methodological precaution, they speak of laws. Yes?

Student: From my little acquaintance with natural science, they still do talk about laws of nature. Newton's laws, for example.

Strauss: Yes. Well, you know in the earlier stages, say at least in the 19th century, called his social science study, social physics which means physics applied to society. Even today the model of the natural science is authoritative for behaviorists.

So we have to consider for one moment this concept of laws of nature. What it means. Did you consult Thomas Aquinas?

Student: inaudible

Strauss: Will you find that for me? Good. So for the time being we will leave this open. Fortunately, we have one text where the older view of laws of nature occurs, and how far it goes back is dark. But this is in Hooker in the Everyman's Library edition, page 150. Now I will read that to you. "All things that are have some operation not violent or casual." Violence means opposed against the nature of the thing, and casual means by mere chance. "Neither does anything begin to exercise the same without some foreconceived end for which it works." Any thing, not only man. "And the end which it works for it not obtained unless the work is also fit to obtain it by. For unto every end, every operation will not serve. That which does assign unto each thing the kind, that which does moderate the force and power, that which does appoint the formal measure of working, the same returns aloft." This is Hooker's definition and, therefore, he can speak later on of the laws which natural agents observe, i.e. laws of beasts and plants and inanimate beings. He speaks in this connection also of laws in the plural. In other words, independently of modern science, the term "laws of nature" existed although it was not, apparently, very frequently used. And this is a very dark

story about which I would like to know more than I do. But the key point of this notion is that the term from which we can understand law is the end. The laws determine the operations conducive to the end. And from this it follows clearly that there will not be universally the same behavior of all individuals of the species. Some achieve their end; others don't. There are infinite ways in which they fail to achieve that. The only uniformity, so to speak, is supplied by the end, not by the way to the end for the reason given.

In modern language which is very bad to use, but which is now necessary, the only thing which is certain is the "ought." The "is" - chaotic. "Ought" - almost chaotic. Do you get this point? I mean, it is strictly speaking not an "ought" because the end process is as much the despair of "is" as (inaudible) Is this point clear? No?

Student: Would you try it again.

Strauss: I will do it, but on a somewhat broader basis. I will do it by the modern definition of law and this I take from Spinoza's Theological Treatise chapter 4 near the beginning. Let me also read it. "The word law absolutely taken means that according to which each individual or all or some of the same species act in the same certain or determinate manner." And this depends either on the necessity of nature or on human arbitrariness. The law which depends upon the necessity of nature is that which follows from the definition of the thing itself necessarily. And from human arbitrariness, that which men have set up. For instance, all bodies when they impinge on other smaller ones, lose so much from their own motion as they communicate with the others. This is a universal law of all bodies which follows from the necessity of nature. In the same way man, when he remembers one thing at once remembers something similar or what he has perceived at the same time. That is a law which follows necessarily from human nature. Good.

So here you have a law of universal behavior, if I may say that. And, of course, the Newtonian laws, the laws of inertia, are all laws of universal behavior, and no reference whatever to the end. This we must try to understand somewhat before we can proceed.

So the older notion which we find in Hooker, and of which there must be traces also elsewhere - I remember a single case in Thomas Aquinas but I can't find it and I have to hope that Mr. \_\_\_\_\_ will find it. But it occurs there. The older notion is based on teleology. There is an end. The modern is based on the denial of notion. In the Newtonian laws there is no reference whatsoever to end.

The end in its terms presupposes, however, the essence because there are a variety of beings - dogs, cats or what have you - and the end differs in each case. The modern view, I will say in advance, is based on the denial not only of the end but also of this of essence, i.e. that there is a variety of essences, that there are essential differences.

Now, how do we perceive the essence? According to the Aristotelian view - the Platonic view is the same - there is something called the mind and something by virtue of which man perceives. In the

language of Shakespeare, the mind has an eye. That's not only the eyes of the body. So, in this way, we perceive the essence, but we perceive something which is also called the property, especially the so-called essential properties. For instance, that man is a rational animal. That is essence. That man is a laughing animal; laughing is an essential property, This in pragmatic terms. If you try to understand man by starting from the fact that he is the only animal which laughs, you get involved in a very cumbersome procedure. Whereas when you start from his being the rational animal, you understand that he is a laughing animal and also that he does other things in a much more natural way. Laughing is only a property.

Now these properties. This was the point where the whole thing started. Irreducible properties. In other words, if you know how laughing comes about - under what conditions - does not really help you to understand laughing in the economy of manners. The most famous example because it was used by a great public poet, is the domitiva, of opiate, in Moliere's Le Malade imaginaire, The Imaginary Sickness. Opium makes men fall asleep. Why? Because it has a domitiva, a power to make one fall asleep. Tautology, and they laughed for a couple of centuries about this wonderful joke. But, of course, it is not as simple as that because surely the chemical formula for opiates is very good for making chemical substitutes for opium and what have you, and perhaps for other purposes. But this whole chemical investigation would be meaningless if we did not know in the first place that this composite, opium, has the power to induce sleep, and from which knowledge we must start if the chemical is to be of any value.

So here I read you another beautiful document - a milestone - to the event which we are discussing. Hobbes' Leviathan, chapter 46 at the beginning where Hobbes defines philosophy. "By philosophy is understood the knowledge acquired by reason from the manner of the generation of anything to the properties, and from the properties to some possible way of generation of the thing, i.e. of the property. To the end to be able to produce as far as matter and human force permit such effects as human life requires."

Now in the Latin version of the same work which appeared seventeen years later, but the time span is much shorter as we could say, is this. In the Latin version, the later version, he replaces "properties" by "generations" or "effects" - by "effects." The property, in other words, is an effect like any other effect. And effects have causes. "Causes" means here, naturally, only material and efficient causes. There are no properties. There are no essences. This is a vulgar concept. You know, common sense notions which have to be abandoned, and we have to replace them by statements indicating the material and efficient causes. This is the key point.

The essence of the thing is the genesis of the thing, and the genesis of the thing is some form of making. It is not, of course, in the case of natural things, human making, but either divine or natural making-some making. So to understand a thing means to understand its coming into being or its making. You remember Vico's "nature" - the birth, the origin. In paragraph 147.

From this one can draw also another conclusion. No, let me first finish this. First we have seen that knowledge means the understanding of nature. Then there comes the great step which Vico clearly took, but some others before him. Knowledge itself is made because if I know how it is made I can make it too. I may not have the power to make earthquakes, but then I can only say to Archimedes, "Give me the point to stand and the material and I can make you an earthquake." So knowledge itself comes to be made, but here is the difficulty: Do we really know how natural things are made? The prudent answer seems to be that we do not know. It's a mystery. So, then, there cannot be knowledge of natural things because we do not know their making. We can only have hypotheses about them. Therefore, the only sphere of genuine knowledge is mathematical knowledge because the mathematical figures and numbers we have made. Hobbes is the one who has stated this most clearly, and the result of Hobbes is this: We have knowledge, strictly speaking, only of mathematical or quasi-mathematical things, and of political things because we have made that big leviathan.

I am an old man now and I must tell you some things to watch which younger people do not know. The memory is so unreliable. I was absolutely sure that there was a passage in Hobbes where he clearly puts these two things together. That we have knowledge only of the mathematical and of the political, not of any natural things. I can't find it. I have a reference to a passage in my Natural Right and History, page 172-173, but it is not clearly there in any of these passages. I believe it is a legitimate inference from Hobbian utterances, but I do not believe the utterance as such occurs anywhere. Surely anyone who wishes to study Vico would have to go into that matter.

There is a study by an American scholar which I use in which I found a reference to the verum factum and I suppose he put together all such references. Yes?

Student: inaudible

Strauss: Yes, but that is very helpful for Father \_\_\_\_\_ who does not know all the passages in Hobbes. I didn't say it was a good article. I said it was a useful article.

Student: inaudible

Strauss: I didn't know (inaudible), but it was clear to me all the time that this was Hobbes because I remembered . . .

Student: He compares Hobbes and Vico and Dewey.

Strauss: Yes, well Dewey is irrelevant and unimportant in this connection, obviously, because he could not have had any influence on Vico.

Now there is a certain difficulty discussed, I think, very well by Croce in his book because there is a passage in Aristotle's Metaphysics in Parson's 51a:31 in which Aristotle seems to say the same thing, but Aristotle speaks here only of mathematics, and in a very special context. Croce is absolutely right when he says this is not the source. This is in Croce's book, page 288 and thereabout. He also mentions that there was a theological heritage

different from the Aristotelian view that he alone knows the things who makes them, i.e. God. But clearly this was never applied to the political things in particular. Now the simple basis of the statement is, of course, this: the old story of the arts. The shoemaker knows his shoe because he knows everything out of which he made it, why he made it and so on. But the key point is that the political things are of this character, that they are strict artifacts and, therefore, fully knowable without any mystery. In other words, the polis is not by nature. If it were by nature it wouldn't be of human making and this would be impossible.

Now Vico takes this over and draws considerable conclusions from it. We will come to that later. I would like to mention only one difficulty regarding Vico. Do we make the political things, the strictly speaking according to Vico?

Student: No.

Strauss: Of course not. What did these poor savages know about what was somehow going on in them. It was somehow going on in them, but without their understanding its nature. They did not, strictly speaking, make it. They did not do what they did consciously. This is the difference. According to Hobbes' view we make the leviathan consciously, or at least we can make it. If it's a good leviathan we must make it consciously. But for Vico that is not true. So this statement is rather obscure in Vico himself.

Let me add only one more point. In studying such a concept as the "laws of nature" as used in the Newtonian laws (I mention the most famous example), then transferred by such men as Vico to political matters as well, it is simply never enough to merely confirm that with the tradition, i.e. the Aristotelian tradition. Never. And I think that many of the wrong things that we read in the literature are due to the fact that people only consider this commanding, ruling tradition. There was also a tradition of a radically different kind. Let us take a very simple example. People say, "Up to the 16th and 17th century, the closed universe. Now, the open universe." As if there had not been plenty of ancient thinkers who spoke of infinite depth, the Epicureans, Democritus, and so on. So the question, then, applying it to natural law, is: Do we find anything of natural law in that tradition? I remember only one point. Lucretius speaks frequently of contracts of nature. I never know how to pronounce the Latin. Well, the "contracts of nature" and one can translate it, since "contracts" doesn't make any sense here immediately, as the "laws of nature." But under one condition as the commentator on the passage mentions. Lucretius does not think of an observed uniformity in nature, but rather of the limit which nature imposes on the growth, life, power, etc., of things. In other words, that the sun cannot go further than it goes. There is a limit to its course. This is a law, not that which describes the cause of it. So that is not the modern natural law in any way.

What, then, is the decisive difference? I mean at least to the extent we can understand it without making any further study. The ancient philosophers - both camps - were concerned in the first place with discovering what they called simply the first things.



Let us take the most simple of these schools - the Democritean-Epicurean. The atoms. To establish that the first things are the atoms in the world. That was the decisive thing. And, of course, they wanted to show that any phenomenon - earthquakes, eclipses - can be understood on that basis. But they were not concerned with the laws by virtue of which you can understand these phenomenon. Later on, at the end of the formulated that science is concerned not with the why, but with the how. He stated this from the end of the process because the law, one can say, tells you how things happen, but does not give you the why. But this is an explanation after the event, not before, and not in terms of the men who made the laws. This much only to remind you of one of the very difficult questions which we somehow all take for granted because it has all happened long before our time. It is part of our furniture and we inhabit it like other furniture, perhaps enjoy it or not enjoy it, but we do not think about it. For me this is one of the most difficult questions - the concept of the laws of nature. Yes?

Student: inaudible

Strauss: No, he does not explain the laws. It is hard to say how motion happens; what is the relation of action, reaction and so forth. And he uses the particles of this mechanical phenomena, the particle nature of physics, mechanics and maybe any small object on earth. But to discover what are the first things out of which everything came into being, through which everything came into being as such. This was, I think, the guiding clarification of pre-modern thought, and in modern times this changed. It seems much more modest - only the how and not the why - and tremendously successful. Think of the thermonuclear bomb or, for that matter other achievements of modern physics. Yes?

Student: Why, here, did you bring in a discussion of Hobbes in discussing Vico's concept of knowledge? Is it to show the extent of Vico's change or . . .

Strauss: No. My starting point was when we came across the first clear passage about science. Now Hobbes speaks about a natural law which is not a normative law, but a law of actual behavior. And this was a notion which was taken over from modern physics, but had a tremendous influence up to the present day on social science. What I tried to show is that this is a peculiarly modern concept. Many of translations which people use, use the term "laws of nature" in the translation of medieval or classical texts and, therefore, confuse the original meaning. I remember a case in the translation of The Guide of the Perplexed with which I had something to do, the best translation hitherto, made about one hundred years ago in French. The translator speaks all the time of the \_\_\_\_\_, where the author speaks only of nature. But by the 19th century people had become so accustomed to understanding nature in terms of laws of nature, that it didn't make sense for him to say, for instance, that it was the nature of fire to do this and this. He had to say the law. And one must simply think about that.

In Plato, the term "law of nature" occurs a single time, and only in the singular. It means here nothing but the order of nature, the order of the cosmos. It is used as a deliberately paradoxical expression because physis and nomos are opposites. And how it

came about that people spoke of laws. For example, that heavy bodies fall. That would be called a law of nature. I do not know. I believe that this has taken place between, say, Aristotle and Galileo at some time as is shown by the influence of Hooker who was not yet influenced by Galileo. That I do not know. Mr. \_\_\_\_\_, they tell me that a well-known Islamic writer of the 14th century, Ibn Khaldun - in the popular mythology regarded as another Vico (I mean as the first sociological philosopher of history) - that he speaks of canons. It comes from the Greek word kanon. And he means by that rules apart from conduct. For example, how diseases run their course. This kind of thing and not of normative laws. I will look into it. This might help a bit, but that is, of course, very detailed and far away. The main point is that the genesis of the concept of "laws of nature" is dark, very dark. Yes?

Student: Several times we discussed the requirement Thomas Aquinas puts on law that it be universally promulgated. It would seem that there would be some difficulty with probing the ancients' conception of natural law and this requirement.

Strauss: Yes, but "universally promulgated" makes sense only in the case of rational beings, doesn't it? The key point is that if it is universally promulgated that doesn't mean that it would be universally obeyed. That was the objection to normative laws. We want laws which will tell us what all men must do in fact. If you only have laws about how men should behave, then you don't know how to manipulate them. But if you know what they must do, what they cannot help doing, then you can start controlling them.

Student: But "natural law" in its ancient sense seemed to put an obligation on man to find his specific excellence, his specific fulfillment. It would seem to put a moral obligation on him.

Strauss: Obviously.

Student: But could we say that this is the case - that each man clearly understands his specific excellence.

Strauss: Yes, well that, of course, is the difficulty from which people like Vico, but also Locke, start. They deny that the law of nature is universally promulgated in fact, and, therefore, the natural law is known - to use Locke's revealing phrase - only to the students of that law and not to the dairy maids and spinsters of Great Britain as he calls them. Therefore, the modern natural law is mathematic. It is to be deduced and can be handed down in codes or, if you please, Euclidean elements of natural law. That happened in the 17th century.

Student: In a way, natural law in the book appears as something that is not universally promulgated and yet, in fact, it is something universally promulgated because it is necessary.

Strauss: Well, the question in fact is this. Actually, there are various facets of this question, one, of course, being, "How far can people who do not know it, who have not studied it, be held responsible?" That's a very crude, but very important question. But the meaning of natural law changed by this very (inaudible) No, then I would have to give a long lecture about the difference between modern and natural law which you have heard more than once.

But there were some other questions. Mr. \_\_\_\_\_?

Student: inaudible

Strauss: That I know. I looked just this morning - unless I overlooked the most obvious thing - I looked up in Greek-English dictionary which is not, of course, enough, I looked up both words, "nomos" and "physis" and there was not a single reference to that. So it cannot be quite obvious. But I happen to know that the expression "law of nature" - nomos in this context - occurs twice in Plato, once in the Timaeus, once in Gorgias. The Gorgias you will read so I don't have to tell you, but it has nothing to do with natural law in the ordinary sense. And the other means nothing but the cosmic order, paradoxically expressed because it would really have to be considered the convention of nature, according to the primary meaning of nomos. This would show the paradox here.

Now when the Stoics speak of laws of nature, as you know from Cicero's De Republica, it is always in reference to human or rational beings. I would be glad of any information regarding the term lex nature not applied to human beings, to rational beings. I did some guessing, but that was of no use. Yes?

Student: You spoke of this in your lecture on natural law. But that was very obvious.

Strauss: Yes, but since you come from St. John's, Mr. \_\_\_\_\_ who knows infinitely more about these matters than I do - I asked him once and he said leges nature, the laws of nature, never before the 17th century, but lex nature in the simple sense of the order of the whole was quite common. But then I found shortly afterwards a passage in Thomas by accident where leges nature, the laws of nature, is used just as it is in Hooker and, therefore, I believe that there is room for further study. Yes, Mr. \_\_\_\_\_.

Student: inaudible

Strauss: Show me the passage not in a translation, but in the Latin original.

Student: He uses both terms, \_\_\_\_\_ and "rex".

Strauss: But what does he mean by it? Does he refer, for example, to reign or hegemony or what have you, or does he refer to human action?

Student: My impression is that he uses "rex" most often in the context of - well, you're talking about the importance of mathematics which may be of no value. I don't know.

Strauss: Look it up and try to find a relatively clear passage and I will be grateful to you. This would confirm Mably's notion because he has a hunch that this has something to do with the Arabic tradition which Roger Bacon quite agrees with, you know. Now this much about this question of natural law.

Now what else was there? I think now that we should turn, for the time being to our text. In paragraph 330 Vico states again the absolute novelty of his new science as if the title New Science

weren't enough. The 18th century was the era of the new sciences. wrote of the new sciences. Hobbes said of his De Cive that it was wholly new

Student: Did you want to pass over everything from 299 to 329?

Strauss: No, I did not. Did you have one special desire?

Student: Not particularly, but I thought that this jump . . . Paragraph 326 is interesting.

Strauss: 326, but there are some before. Alright. We should proceed in an orderly manner. You are quite right. Now in paragraphs 298 to 301 there are a variety of allusions to the problem of the Hebrew people. For example, all Asiatic people remained in their original civilized state. Does he not say so? It's somewhere here. Paragraph 302: Only the Phoenicians left Asia. But no nation was more impenetrable than the Hebrews. The implication, hence, more barbaric. But we will find other passages which make doubtful Vico's acceptance of the Biblical account.

It is more important for us to consider paragraph 308 following. Let us read paragraph 308.

Student: The remark of Don Cassius is worth of consideration, that custom is like a king and law like a tyrant; which we must understand as referring to reasonable custom and to law not animated by natural reason."

Strauss: Yes, but that is the question: Whether that is Vico's last word. Because these very earliest customs, arising naturally, however unreasonable, are not (inaudible) relatively speaking. Let us turn to the next paragraph.

Student: "This axiom decides by implication the great dispute "Whether law resides in nature or in the opinion of men,"

Strauss: In other words, the old question of whether right is by nature or by convention. The old question. Yes?

Student: "Which comes to the same thing as that propounded in the corollary of the eighth axiom, 'whether man is naturally sociable.'"

Strauss: Is there someone here who will interpret as why these are identical propositions in different terms?

Student: May I ask a question?

Strauss: No, first you must interpret this. Oh, do you mean for the understanding of this matter?

Student: Yes. inaudible

Strauss: I see. In other words there would have to be natural right or man would be at bitter odds. But even that question is not explicable before we have understood the relation between the two propositions. What is the relation?

Student: The relation seems to be that since men always live together, it must be in their nature to live together. And living

together means living according to right.

Strauss: In other words, more simply, if man is by nature social, then and only then can there be natural right. If man is not by nature social, then there is no natural right, but only right made up by men. That is the connection. But what you said, Mr. \_\_\_\_\_ doesn't follow because brutes who are social do not have right because they lack reason. That's simple. In other words, Vico understood the issues very well. I mean he was not a confused man. It is necessary to emphasize that. So if he talks confusedly we have to find a nonconfused reason for his talking confusedly. Go on.

Student: "In the first place, the natural right of nations was ordained by custom."

Strauss: "By custom" which is the king and the tyrant, as it were. Yes?

Student: "(which Dion says commands us by pleasure like a king)"

Strauss: "By pleasure." Keep this in mind. Yes?

Student: "And not by law (which Dion says commands us by force like a tyrant). . . (for there is nothing more pleasant) than observing natural customs."

Strauss: This is the first time, and the only time, where Vico brings out a hedonistic element in his thought, which we have never seen before. We have seen before that self-interest is the basis, and "the invisible hand," but that self-interest works in that way that what is conducive primarily to the self-interest is tested by its pleasantness. That is enough.

In paragraph 314 following he makes clear that since all nations developed independently of one another, they share the same right. This right is not of human origin, but natural and proves, therefore, divine providence. This natural right, however, which develops naturally is not the natural right of the philosopher as he says time and again. And, of course, neither is it the same as the natural right of the moral theologians. It is these things which we have seen before, the most primitive beginnings of humanity. The bringing to light of the true natural right is a most important theme of his new science.

Now, let us read paragraph 320.

Student: "Golden is the definition which Ulpian assigns to civil equity: 'a kind of probable judgment, not naturally known to all men' (as natural equity is) 'but to those few who, being eminently endowed with prudence, experience, or learning, have come to know what things are necessary for the conservation of human society.' This is what is nowadays called 'reason of state.'"

Strauss: Yes, he does not say it nice enough. He calls it in good Italian or beautiful Italian "reason of state." Civil equity is reason of state. The prudent judgment of what is conducive to the common good here and now. Now "reason of state" doesn't have to be taken in the most nasty view, but it includes

nasty possibilities because sometimes it is necessary to attack your neighbor for the common good. This is clear.

Lecture IX

Vico: The New Science, October 28, 1963

Now, you made some excellent points. You said that poetic history is the sense of mankind in contradistinction to the intellect of mankind. That, I think, explains to us better than anything I have said myself hitherto, the meaning of "common sense." You know, he refers to the common sense of mankind. I think that you have to take the word "sense" very literally. Common sense in contradistinction to common intellect. That is very, very important.

Then you spoke of Vico's assertion that words are by nature and not by convention. The traditional view was, of course, the opposite to that. One famous document to the contrary is Plato's dialogue Cratylus where words are not seen as at all natural. But one would have to study the Cratylus to see whether Plato means it. So we can dismiss that for the time being. But the difficulty, of course, if one asserts that words are by nature, is the variety of languages. That this should be "table" in English and \_\_\_\_\_ in Greek - what's the reason for this? Now Vico gives an explanation. He refers to the variety of nations, to the natural variety. Incidentally, this explanation was very helpful and shows how very carefully one must study the definitions which he gives. In which paragraph is the definition of "nature" which you quoted?

Student: I quoted from two places - paragraphs 134 and 147

Strauss: Which was the one which was particularly helpful because of the reference to place or time?

Student: That's paragraph 147.

Strauss: Would you read that?

Student: "The nature of things is nothing but their coming into being at certain times and in certain guises. Whenever the time and guise is thus and so, such and not otherwise are the things or institutions that come into being."

Strauss: I think that "place" is also implied.

Student: inaudible

Strauss: Yes, but surely the individual is the particular thing as it emerges. So if man has some individuality here at this time, and another one at another time, by nature, then this is as natural as what is common to men. Now here he refers particularly to climate, but with the same right he could refer, of course, to race.

Student: I didn't want to specify too much because I wasn't sure

Strauss: Yes, but if the commentator, Mr. \_\_\_\_\_, can be trusted, you need (inaudible), but that does not necessarily hold because the rule is that what an author says once is much less important than what he says innumerable times. That is an evident

ground rule of interpretation. The key point is that Vico must make such an assertion. He may not speak of climate. He may speak of race or anything else, but it must be a natural basis for the variety of nations. Otherwise, this whole theory is untenable.

Now, of course, the greatest man who did this shortly after Vico was Montesquieu who said alot about climate, but also spoke of other natural conditions.

Now the key point is that the human race consists of various parts by nature, not by convention. Here you have this nation with this quality of character, and here you have that nation. That is not due to contract. Nations are not established by the fact that some of these men happened to have made a social contract among themselves. But rather the natural basis for these men forming a nation - that is absolutely crucial. In other words, a nation is a natural unity, and the nationalism of the 19th century is based on that. Now, they got it more directly, although not entirely, from Rousseau. But fundamentally it is the same doctrine.

Now, there is the difficulty regarding the fact that the three languages and letters are, on the one hand, said to be successive, and on the other hand to be contemporary. You tried to solve this contradiction. I'm not sure whether one can leave it at what you say, but the contradiction is underlying.

You noticed that in his critique of the three princes of natural right - Grotius, Selden and Pufendorf - he omits now the subject of providence. You raise the question of what plain providence means in Grotius. One can say that he makes this assumption: man, at the origin which he discusses, is bestial. Given this bestiality he had to develop in this and this and no other manner, and not by virtue of a teleological method - namely, in order to become civilized - but there were necessities intelligible to him at the time. By the virtue of the change thus made he has new needs, and this leads to another change. But there is no teleological necessity in itself. One could, of course, also say that given the assertion that these bestial men are men after the fall - according to the official doctrine - to what extent is he entitled to call this a natural process if it is fallen nature? That is another way of indicating the difficulty.

The last point you make - on which I cannot agree with you - is the thing you say about Vico's assertion that name and nature are the same.

Student: But the Greeks say that.

Strauss: Not only the Greeks, but universally. This is exactly a sign of the stupidity of early men: that they think that the name of a thing is the nature of the thing. And this is leading up to the criticism - which is not explicit - of Aristotle and (inaudible). But you that was a famous syllogism - they were not only (inaudible), but that Aristotle was - in the words of Hobbes - too anxious to examine words and not the things. You know, the constant objection was that he was examining the variety of meanings. And, in fact, the name at the most expresses certain qualities of the thing (inaudible). He does not, of course, bring out the true nature of the thing as



it would be brought out by Baconian science. So this is not Vico's last word on the relation of names and nature.

Student: What I meant to say was that he used this as a tool of analysis.

Strauss: Not to understand, say, the nature of a table.

Student: No, but to understand how early man understood.

Strauss: Yes. That is correct. But if we would say that the names that the various nations supplied originally to the various things they observed, this is, of course, not a clue to the things themselves according to Vico. This has to be done by Baconian science. But this is a clue to their mentality.

Now here we have a note from Mr. \_\_\_\_\_. Do paragraphs 424-27 imply that all ideas engendered by Aesop (inaudible) are only products of natural reason which the process of history permits?

Strauss: Yes, surely a certain stage of reason, i.e. in the case of Aesop when the plchs were in the process of no longer being fooled by the superstition of the patricians. This is a necessary step. Originally they were still dumber than the early patricians. But then the stage is reached where they perceive that they are exploited. This is a necessary stage, and to that extent the ideas expressed by Aesop are necessary in that stage.

Student: inaudible

Strauss: I see now what you mean. Yes, that is true. But, still, why could there not be (inaudible)  
That is always the implication. After the new science was founded by Galileo and Bacon - you can also add Newton if you want - it became possible for a man called Giambattista Vico to apply this to human things, and to understand in principle, at any rate, the whole thing. Now there is, of course, possibly further progress in detail. This is a very sketchy book, after all.

Student: Would it be fair to say of Vico that he considers himself as having this absolute understanding?

Strauss: Yes, but the point is that prior to I believe, no one who considered this difficulty of history ever brought this out. In other words, Vico does not explain how it comes that in that second round - the first round was that of (inaudible) - and then the second round beginning around 1500 - why only in the second round could be seen what was not seen in the first round. He doesn't even raise the question which Hegel raised. And Hegel, therefore, said that Christianity had to be the religion of the modern Western world so that philosophy could reach its peak. Vico has not made any such statement, at least that I have as yet come across.

Before we go on to our reading I would like to state the general subject again. How to approach Vico. There are some very simple things which occurred to me rather late. That is a very common experience in scholarship. Some of you may have heard the expression "natural right and history." This is truly the formula for

Vico. Natural right and history. Now I did not invent this formula. In a way I took it over from Ernst Troeltsch's essay which was published in the English translation by Barker and is now available, as I learned from Mr. \_\_\_\_\_, in paperback. They are all taken from Gierke's Das deutsche Gernossenschaftsrecht, but I do not know what this is called.

Student: Natural Law and the Theory of Society.

Strauss: I see. There is an essay at the end of Troeltsch written after the first World War, after the defeat of Germany, reflecting on the radical political differences between Germany and the West. And then he put it as (inaudible) from Germany that as the Germans abandoned natural right altogether and replaced it by history, in the West the tradition of natural right is still going strong. Well, it wasn't so strong around 1922 when Troeltsch wrote, and if he had lived to see 1963 he would be quite startled. But, still, whatever might be true in academic life in the popular orientation, I think that there is something to that. Troeltsch admitted the political value of the natural right tradition, but he himself rejected it. His major work is entitled Historicism and it deals with the problem of history and historicism, but on a historicist basis. Now this had some effect on the social science in this country. There was a writer very inferior to Troeltsch in learning and everything else - Mannheim - who wrote a book called Ideology and Utopia which was published in 1929 or thereabouts, and which is a very crude restatement of what Troeltsch meant. It was also written from a somewhat narrow political basis.

Still, Troeltsch is today forgotten and I think quite rightly because what was interesting in Troeltsch was said in a far more interesting manner by Heidegger. As far as my study is concerned, this is due already to a reaction to Heidegger. Heidegger took over Troeltsch's position deepening it more than anything which has gone before. For me this sort of thing has become a problem and, therefore, realizing that it is a problem, I saw that the most direct alternative to history is natural right.

But now to Vico. I wonder whether one cannot say that Vico was the first to go away from natural right to history, or who replaced natural right by history. This, I submit, might be a good overall consideration. But we must be careful because he still speaks of natural right, but he historicizes natural right in a peculiar way.

The first step of this investigation would have to be an explicit critique of natural right, i.e. of the three princes because Grotius, Selden and Pufendorf are referred to ad nauseum. But one would have to put together all these references and compare them. Mr. \_\_\_\_\_ began today, in a way, by observing that the repetitions are not identical restatements, but there are differences and we will have to watch them.

The second step, however, is to make clear something which Vico never says. I mean that this critique is, in effect, also a critique of Thomas Aquinas, of Cicero, and of any other natural teaching. Here, in this context, we will observe the fact that Vico is misleading regarding the bearing of his criticism, as if he criticized only these three men. One has to go into how far his presentation is deliberately misleading. In plain English, whether

the exception of the Hebrews from the development described can be maintained on this basis. More simply and formally stated, one has to reflect on his way of presenting things, on his manner of writing.

Now the third point, after one has seen this, is to study the variety of natural rights which he teaches. Not that the natural right of the gentiles should have been different in China from in Mexico because that isn't the difference he is discussing. But rather what he calls loosely the early stage, the divine stage, the heroic stage, and the human stage - how they differ. There are various manifestations of natural right which differ both in the "how" and in the "what." In the "how", nonrationally or rationally? And in the substance, of course, prepolitical or political? So part of that is the necessary or natural sequence of these various forms of natural right.

As a consequence - and that is the fourth point - the third stage is a stage of political life, of civil equity. One has to consider precisely what does natural right mean in that stage, i.e. the only stage of practical importance to us. And here one has to find out the full bearing of his assertion that civil equity is identical with reason of state. In other words, if civil equity is the same as utility. It would amount to that. You know, reason of state is a nasty expression because everyone thinks of Machiavellianism and utilitarianism is a nice thing. Everyone thinks of these nice Englishmen, but it is of course in principle the same.

In this connection one has to discuss the question of democracy and monarchy because they both are forms of political life proper (I mean of the rational stage), and in particular the question of which of these two forms, if any, is higher than the other.

Then - the fifth point - we would have to turn to the fundamental question, namely the theological form which Vico has given to his new science - his doctrine of providence which reminded us of the "invisible hand" of Adam Smith. It clearly means - and in this respect there is perfect agreement with later developments - what happens in private life is that private lies or errors or stupidity or passions lead unintentionally to the common good. And this is, of course, meant to be true in all stages.

I mention two more items which one would have to consider and I make these remarks not completely blind to the needs of either one. The question, in what precisely does Vico's originality consist? Now, one can say that he tries to give a natural or rational account of the history of mankind from its beginnings to when? Well, let us first say, to the end so that it would be complete. Now this notion, of course, is not in itself original because the Fifth Book of Lucretius gives such an account. But what is the difference between Vico and Lucretius? I mean, that Lucretius is very short and Vico is very long I know, but why is Vico very long and Lucretius very short? Short speech and long speech. We have discussed this on another occasion.

Student: inaudible

Strauss: I mean, what is the simplest formula? I think you have heard it.

Student: inaudible

Strauss: But what is the evidence. Have you proof that Vico would have been longer? But very obvious. If I remember well, the single proper name in Lucretius is . Very simple. Lucretius' account is not based on any empirical historical evidence. It is a simple construction, and no need is felt for any empirical historical support. Whereas Vico is very much concerned with empirical historical proof of his account.

Another point which you should consider is that Lucretius has a single process from his beast-men of the beginning to the wholly corrupt men at the end. In Vico there is at least one repetition of the same process, and there is the possibility that he played with the possibility of "n" repetitions. We have no basis to decide that. But the most important difference is this: Vico is very much concerned with showing the necessities - the mechanisms - of the process and of each of its stages. Whereas Lucretius assumes that this is a sequence of stages, and he shows each of them. But he never shows the emergence of one from the other. In brief, he is not concerned with the laws governing this history, whereas Vico is. From this I think that we can understand seriously what Vico meant when he spoke of an ideal history. And ideal history means, I think, more than anything else, the laws. In other words, ideals not in the sense of moral ideals and so on, but in the sense in which mathematical objects are ideal objects - laws.

Cannot, then, one say - and I submit this to you as a proposition - that Vico's new science is, as they say more or less here, the first philosophy of history or science of history as a social physics. Now where would we find a philosophy of history or a science of history as a social physics before? I mean, that The City of God is not a philosophy of history, but a theology of history is today generally admitted, and therefore we can disregard it. The same with \_\_\_\_\_. Where do we find it?

Student: inaudible

Strauss: Do they give a philosophy of history? Vico calls this enterprise "universal history," \_\_\_\_\_, but he does not, I don't believe, \_\_\_\_\_ this way. If you mean his teaching regarding the sequence of regimes. Do you mean that?

Student: inaudible

Strauss: I think that you can say this: Politiques writes a universal history, i.e. universal for the Mediterranean basin. A good historian must be causal. Therefore, he must sometimes - well, the most striking occasion is the sixth book where in order to explain why Rome defeated Carthage in 1724, he gives his whole doctrine of regimes and their succession in order to explain that. But one cannot speak of a philosophy of history there. Yes?

Student: inaudible

Strauss: To what extent is this a philosophy of history?

Student: inaudible

Strauss: Yes, but you have to be careful. In the first place, Machiavelli had some flaws. Now that I know. I believe someone with the name \_\_\_\_\_ who wrote an essay which I once read on Machiavelli's \_\_\_\_\_. He asserted that Machiavelli speaks all the time general rules, legally general rules. He speaks three times of that. They have the character of practical rules, rules of how princes should act and how they should not act. Laws or tenets of how people in society act. I believe that is very hard to say. In other words, I would not say that the verities - the alleged verities - which Machiavelli establishes and which he frequently formulates are any different from similar statements which Aristotle makes. For example, if you want to establish a rural democracy you must take into account all these things, and of course there will be certain statements which are true of every version of democracy. I have not made as specific as I should have made how many of these chapter headings of the Discourses state what one should do as distinguished from what people, in fact, do. This would be necessary. inaudible

I mean in our sense of the word, once this concept of a philosophy of history has emerged, then you can find philosophy of history anywhere. My favorite example is in Xenophon, the beginning of the Greek History which begins with the word "Thereafter." It is the only book ever written which begins with the word "Thereafter." I have heard of a sermon which begins with the word "Thus" which is perhaps more interesting. But a history beginning with the word "Thereafter" is absolutely weak, and a reflection on this thought has been presented on this very profound reasoning. Because people say, with some justice, that Xenophon's Greek History is a continuation of Thucydides. Therefore, if it is a mere continuation it can begin with "Thereafter." The trouble is that what he says on the first three or four pages is still in Thucydides. In a sense, one can say that he also ends the work with the word "Thereafter." Not literally, but in fact. And what he wants to say is very legitimate, especially from the constitution of the work.

Now what is history in our age? "Thereafter" or "Then." "Then" is always present. "Then," "then," "then." And in each case, confusion. People believe that they will get rid of confusion. That is what they set out to do. That's the end of the book - the Battle of \_\_\_\_\_. The Greeks started it to fight against Thebes because there was such confusion that they wanted to get rid of it all. And thereafter there was as great confusion as before. We have only to take our limited experience in our lifetime (inaudible) And this is another quality of the philosophy of history, but it doesn't present itself. Yes?

Student: inaudible

Strauss: I have to depend almost entirely on what I read in Mr. \_\_\_\_\_ book. What does Ibn Khaldun set out to do? states it very clearly. I forgot it.

Student: inaudible reference to the difference between history and philosophy

Strauss: I see. If I remember well, what Ibn Khaldun was trying to do is this: To give a historical or a rational account of Islam. This can be stated as follows: Islam presents itself as a divine doctrine and as superior to philosophy. Formally, Khaldun

accepts that, but there are great difficulties if you leave it at that. So, as a philosopher, he tries to give an account of Islam, i.e. he must give a substitute for what one can call the super-rational history which is Islam's own self-justification. And I believe that this is what gives unity to his whole work. I believe that the other considerations of a more general kind are incidental to this. But since neither of us knows all the fact about Ibn Khaldun, it is not right to decide about that.

The last point would, of course, be a critique of Vico. To what extent does he succeed in establishing such a social physics? And to what extent is such a social physics possible at all? Or differently stated, is Xenophon's "philosophy of history" which does not claim to find a rational order not more sober? We have seen and we will find other cases that Vico cannot seriously claim that this simple schema which he develops - the three stages - is sufficient. I mean, for example, philosophy only in Greece and great differences in the various (inaudible) and we will find other cases.

Now we will turn to our reading. The key point which he makes at the beginning of the fourth book is that hitherto all scholars have separated from each other the origin of languages and the origin of letters. Now what is the common view?

Student: (inaudible), family.

Strauss: Sure. Language precedes letters. Not only language proper, but any other signs or characters. Vico rejects this. The dominant view is based on the failure to consider that the first language was mute, i.e. men did not speak from the very beginning. They communicated by signs. Let us say something like letters. Here the distinction between language and letters cannot be made because the first letters were hieroglyphs, signs. And signs were the first means of communication which men used, so to speak, orally. We do not have to go into the details of that.

There is another point. He mentions here the example as the proof that we speak of grammar. Grammar is the science of language. And if you translate it literally, grammar means letter. And this fact proves the identity of language and letter which is, of course, not true. It is a mere accident. Grammar meant originally the letters for writing. The larger meaning as language or the structure of the language, is secondary. This item is of no validity.

In paragraph 430 we find something which is quite interesting. Let us read this from the beginning.

Student: "Having now to enter upon a discussion of this matter . . . their Goths had preserved from the beginning of the world the letters divinely invented by Adam."

Strauss: Let us stop here for one moment. Here he summarizes merely the view of some scholars, but since he brings up the question of the letters of Adam we must, of course, wonder what Vico thought about this subject. I mean if letters and language are inseparable what letters - and Adam spoke admittedly - what letters did he make. And this this was prior to the fall, of

course, he must have had some alphabetic language system which is far superior to that primitive view of Livy. This would be an implication, and it would be necessary for Vico to face this question which, of course, he never does for reasons which you know. Now, paragraph 433.

Student: "Around this truth we assemble the following others. Among the Greeks the words name and character had the same meaning, so that the Church Fathers used indiscriminately the two expressions de divinis characteribus and de divinis nominibus."

Strauss: Yes, well of course the question of the divine names was always very important throughout the tradition. It is a difficult thing to say that these names are also conventional. Think only of the Lord's name in Exodus - Jehovah as it is pronounced in the Christian tradition. This is not just a name, but the name which God used for himself. And somewhat later in this paragraph when he comes to speak of the French. . . Do you see that?

Student: "Similarly in Greek nomos signifies law, and from nomos comes nomisma . . . Among the Hebrews also, of the three parts into which they divided the animal sacrificed as a peace-offering, the fat was accounted God's due and was burnt at the altar."

Strauss: Yes. And also the place where he quoted from the twelfth law of the Law of the Twelve Tables.

Student: "The Italians, following the same line of thought as the ancient Romans, called the manors poderi, as having been acquired by force. Further evidence: The returned barbarism called the fields with their boundaries presas terrarum. The Spaniards call bold enterprises prendas. The Italians call family coats-of-arms imprese, and use termini in the sense of "words" (a usage surviving in scholastic dialectic)."

Strauss: Here he has condensed quite a few things. From the early identification of language and letters, i.e. the signs which signify the things naturally, men have high regard, also in later times, for words and letters. Now the Greek language stemming from very early times still affects the usages of the Church fathers. So it affects even Christian theology. So we find here another analogy of pagan things with Hebrew things. How can this be understood - this agreement between the Hebrew Bible and the gentiles in such a great matter if they have nothing in common? Must we not apply, in other words, the principle of criticism of Vico also to the Bible according to his own indications? And the problem of force which we will have to take up later, comes up again in paragraph 435, for example, when he says shortly before the middle of the paragraph - "The plough."

Student: "The ploughshare signified that he had reduced those lands to cultivation, and thus tamed and made them his own by force."

Strauss: By force. Yes, the original right to property is force. This will be qualified and refined in the sequel. Now, in paragraph 437 near the end where he comes to quote Varro.

Student: "Be that as it may, there can be no doubt that among the Latins Varro occupied himself with the language of the gods, for he had the diligence to collect thirty thousand of their names, which would have sufficed for a copious divine vocabulary, with which the peoples of Latium might express all their human needs, which in those simple and frugal times must have been few indeed, being only the things that were necessary to life."

Strauss: In other words, the many gods simply corresponds to the many necessities of life. The gods are nothing but the deeds for necessity. Yes?

Student: "The Greeks too had gods to the number of thirty thousand, as has also been noted in the Axioms; for they made a deity of every stone, spring, brook, plant and off-shore rock. Such deities included the dryads, hamadryads, oreads and napeads. Just so the American Indians make a god of everything that exceeds their limited understanding. Thus the divine fables of the Greeks and Latins must have been the true first hieroglyphics, or sacred or divine characters, corresponding to those of the Egyptians."

Strauss: So the language of the gods is not, of course, a language which the gods spoke. These gods did not really exist. But the language of early human beings was in terms of gods. All things of importance are gods, namely the things which they need. Everything which early men needed was understood to them to be a god.

Now what                      did in the 19th century in his Essence of Religion is, in a way, a restatement of this. I remember near the beginning - "Why is a cow sacred in India?" Because it is the most important thing for them. These things have by now become trivial.

In 440 when he speaks, for example, of the Phoenicians that they were the first trading nation of the world, is another reference to the fact of the various peculiarities of the nations, and the development is not everywhere the same.

A little bit later on when he comes to speak of the Chaldeans. Will you read that?

Student: "The Phoenicians brought to Greece hieroglyphics received from others, and that these could only have been the mathematical characters or geometric figures which they had received from the Chaldeans. The latter were beyond question the first mathematicians and especially the first astronomers of the nations; whence Zoroaster the Chaldean (whose name means 'observer of the stars' according to Bochart) was the first sage of the gentile world."

Strauss: So, in other words, the wisdom of the nations begins with mathematics and astronomy, which is in itself the basis of a chronology.

Student: In paragraph 441 he seems to be accepting diffusion as coming in the third, or human, age which is the age of intercourse among nations. . . .



Student: "There is no worth in the contention of many scholars that, because the Hebrews and the Greeks give almost the same names to their vulgar letters, the Greeks must have got theirs from the Hebrews. It is more reasonable that the Hebrews should have imitated the Greek nomenclature than visa versa."

Strauss: So the Hebrew alphabet is derivative from the Greek. How much does this imply? Were there hieroglyphs originally? Hebrew mutatives. How could this be? They coincide with the election.

Now, paragraph 442. We find something helpful there.

Student: "These arguments confute the opinion of those who would have it that Cocrops . . . For Sancuniates was called the historian of truth; that is, a writer of what Varro in his division of times calls the historical time."

Strauss: We will leave it at that. Keeping in mind the question about the Hebrew alphabet, who is the first Hebrew historian? According to the traditional view, of course, Moses. In the light of Biblical criticism as it was made by Spinoza, in the time before Vico, Moses is not, Moses is not the author of the Pentateuch. There must have been someone after this man writing a history. In brief, it is worth considering (although the basis here is much too small for that), whether the case of Moses is not similar to that of Sancuniates. In other words, Vico would not deny the existence of Moses, but he would surely deny that these books under his name could have been written by Moses.

In paragraph 443 - we cannot read this whole part - again, keep in mind this question. Since prose is originally the language of the plebs, is Hebrew prose? Is vulgar Hebrew the language of the Hebrew plebs? That is a question which would have to be considered.

Now, in paragraph 444 it is stated as Mr. \_\_\_\_\_ made clear to us, words are by nature, not by convention and this leads to more specific questions in paragraph 445.

Student: "There remains, however, the very great difficulty . . . so and not otherwise there have arisen as many different languages as there are nations."

Strauss: Is there an alternative to the explanation of the variety of languages? Of the origin of different languages?

Student: inaudible

Strauss: Yes, but first of all that was a gentile nation, wasn't it? Surely this confusing arising from the attempt to build the Tower of Babel - that and no other explanation. I think the clear exclusion makes me sure that that was what he had in mind. This, in other words, is the only explanation. Not the Biblical one. The diversity of climate, natural diversity, the reason for the diversity of custom and of languages - we have discussed this before.

In the same paragraph he refers also to the fact that the names of the same kings are called in one way in the holy language are said in a different way in the profane language. This is a reminder of the fact that Vico is always remembering Biblical history. I think that no one can seriously doubt that any intelligent or even unintelligent writer of former ages always knew the Biblical history. Mr. \_\_\_\_\_?

Student: inaudible reference to the people being scattered at the time of the building of the Tower of Babel.

Strauss: I did not look it up. Did you check it before coming to class? You didn't check it. I also didn't.

Second Student: Why were they scattered?

Strauss: As punishment. Part of human pride.

Student: When they were building the Tower they couldn't understand one another, so they scattered.

Strauss: That's correct. Now I remember. So I think that there is a contradiction between Vico's account and the Biblical account. Yes?

Student: He seems to say that somehow there is a significance to the difference among the languages.

Strauss: What does significance mean?

Student: Well, he says that the differences come from a difference in point of view.

Strauss: But how does the difference in point of view arise?

Student: It goes back to poems.

Strauss: Purely natural causes. So it doesn't have a meaning, strictly speaking. I think that meaning implies for a purpose. Mr. \_\_\_\_\_?

Student: Why must Vico assert that differentiation of the languages has the intermediary stage of differences in points of view?

Strauss: No, the point of view refers, for example, to why a camera appears differently to people who use it and to people who do not use it, for one reason or another. Take any other example. But the difference in point of view is itself created by mere natural instincts. The difference in point of view is an intermediate stage; it has no teleological significance.

Student: No, I did not want to say it was teleological. I wanted to say that he did not absolutely need to bring in a differentiation of the points of view if he was merely trying to get from natural causes to the differentiation of languages.

Strauss: No, he must

(inaudible)

Now, in paragraph 446 he makes very clear, as Mr. \_\_\_\_\_ pointed out, the three languages are **here presented** as contemporaneous and not as successive. But I believe that the solution which Mr. \_\_\_\_\_ suggested is not tenable because if these were such mutants, and if the vulgar language is intellectually superior to the hieroglyphic language, how could these impious people, as he calls them - the plèbs, have developed this more intellectual form of expression already at the beginning? This you did not explain.

Student: I suggested another alternative. That is, that perhaps the three ages is not a strict rule - that, in fact you wouldn't have to worry about the language . . .

Strauss: No. You see, Hegel's construction is much more interesting than Vico's. Hegel extended it further. What he calls the father, Hegel calls the master, and what he calls the beast, Hegel calls the slave.

Lecture XIVico: The New Science, November 4, 1963

This was a very good paper. I think that it is the best that you ever gave in my seminar hitherto. But I mean relatively good and absolutely good. And I think you are a very modest man. And I think that it is a consequence of that that you deliver so unsatisfactorily. Because you do not believe that you have done well enough, you read too fast.

Student: inaudible

Strauss: Yes. Well, good. What did you say about civil equity towards the end of the paper? Because it was very hard to follow you, I believe. But I think there would be quite a few who would agree with you. Now what did you say about civil equity. I didn't follow it.

Student: I said that civil equity, as it was used earlier, had to be distinguished from one age to another. The time of civil equity was different from the time of natural equity.

Strauss: Yes, but when do you place the civil equity?

Student: We would expect, I guess, that this would be a time of civil equity.

Strauss: If I remember well it means exactly the human age - not the heroic or divine age. And the civil age is the age of utility proper. That there is, to some extent, utility earlier is true, but the unqualified orientation by utility is a characteristic of the human age. Mr. \_\_\_\_\_, you seem to agree with me.

Student: The idea is that the heroic age is a natural age - natural equity. inaudible

Strauss: Yes. In the age when the civil laws take over they are more rational. It's not necessarily democracy. It can also be absolute monarchy of the enlightened type.

Student: The time of civil equity, though, is the time of the particular law as opposed to the universal law. The laws are in particular, as you said, rather than a generality.

Strauss: No, that is the early age when you have examples rather than laws.

Student: I recall that he used the phrase, "The law is harsh, but so is \_\_\_\_\_." And he says the law is difficult because it is in particular.

Strauss: Yes, but this ruthless, literal meaning doesn't, I don't believe, belong to the age of humanity. It is a relic of the early savagery.

Student: inaudible

Strauss: No. I don't remember the paragraph, but I am reasonably sure that civil equity is the same as reason of state. That is to

say that the lawgivers establish the laws - or at least

(inaudible) the laws with a view to what is useful in this situation. Here for the people as a whole because the equality of men is now recognized. There is no longer a bifurcation into an upper and lower class by nature different, as is characteristic of the early society. Whether it is done by a democratic assembly or an absolute monarch doesn't make any difference because they both belong to the higher stage. Here, I believe, you were wrong, but try to find the passage and we will discuss it next time.

Now there was also one thing which you should have explained to the class as you referred to hostis. . Citizen and hostis. This is a Latin word and not everyone here knows Latin.

Student: inaudible

Strauss: Yes, but in the ordinary meaning in Latin it is, of course, enemies. But the original meaning was stranger, and that meant originally all strangers were enemies. That is the point. And this was connected with a factor to which you also referred, that Vico makes this strange etymology (explanation on blackboard) \_\_\_\_\_ comes from \_\_\_\_\_. That, I must say, I had known for years before I read it in Vico, but it was in use in some passage in Plato which I do not remember where this absurd etymology is suggested. You know, polymus has a different stem than polis \_\_\_\_\_. Now the joke has this serious meaning. The city is necessarily a particular society - the frontier and, therefore, the possibility of war. I mean there is no city without the possibility of war. That belongs to it and, to that extent, one can say polis - ironic with this impossible but helpful etymology - polis stems from polymus. And hostis as we and they. That is the fundamental distinction.

Now you spoke at the beginning of your paper of a certain superiority of the plebs and natural right in the highest sense, whereby it becomes identical with rational right. That belongs to the plebian stage. I do not know if you made the latter remark, but you surely spoke of the superiority of the plebs and . . .

Student: Despite the fact that the plebians, at any given time, are relatively stupid.

Strauss: But then there comes the type of plebian who sees through the swindle. Remember what he said about \_\_\_\_\_? He is the hunchback slave who is, however, clever. But he cannot express his criticism of the rulers and, therefore, he uses fables.

Student: inaudible

Strauss: Yes, but in the former passage we saw what the political meaning of that is. That the slaves are \_\_\_\_\_, but are still very powerful. They see the situation that they have no right to rule because all men are equal. In that stage, \_\_\_\_\_ expresses criticism, in this precise form, of Hegel. But the next stage is, of course, that they act on that. So the pleb becomes reasonable and becomes, in a way, superior to the patrician, in this process. And this reminds you of the Hegelian construction to which I referred earlier that the locus of reason are slaves, not the masters. Because the masters fight and enjoy the booty. The people

who work and have to apply their minds to what they produce - this is the progressive element in history.

Now we have this thought in a very different form, but with the same political results in Tocqueville - a progress of equality which started ages ago but which reached a spectacular plane, but which goes on and will be victorious. Now, how does Vico stand to this view? To a kind of necessary progress from original aristocracy - in a very harsh one, to boot - to a final democracy. Hegel was not, of course, in favor of democracy, but in a sense his construction is nevertheless democratic. In other words, no democratic form, but a democratic spirit. I mean, the free equality of opportunity is, in fact, admitted by Hegel. Not the equality of political rights.

Now how does Vico stand in regard to this process of a final democratic future?

Student: What immediately comes to mind is the contradiction between the minds of the wise men and the minds of the gods.

Strauss: Yes. That is very complex. But something very simple. What is the schema which he suggests? Well, of course, there is the prepolitical, then the aristocracy, and then - and this breaks down - commonwealth or democracy and then?

Student: Absolute monarchy.

Strauss: Yes. And then decay. So, in other words, there is no simple progress here. It is this. From early barbarism to this dissolution. And if democracy is the most desirable, it is only in a certain stage.

Then you referred to paragraph 485. Do you remember what you said in this connection? Read it again.

Student: "And among all human possibilities, once we have seen that civil governments were not born either of fraud or of the violence of a single man . . . one cannot imagine any way but the one we have described by which civil power could emerge from family authority." Because this was the natural way.

Strauss: Yes but why - and I believe you added some criticism of your own later - but let us first see how he knew that. That the first society was the family. That was granted. It was the tradition and he simply accepted it. Why not the possibility that the independent family on the basis of equality unite and form the first political society? Why not that? Because that is the way that Hobbes and Locke and, of course, Aristotle, too, thought of it. That the families are unable to defend themselves properly and then they ally themselves and form, then, the first society. And they could do this any way - democratically, oligarchically, monarchically. Now why is Vico dissatisfied with that?

Student: Because the most fierce struggle at this stage is between the ruler and the ruled.

Strauss: But why not have these fellows in Hobbes' state of nature each sitting in his foxhole and then calling to each other

"Let's get out of here and live in peace, and go into houses" and so on. Why not that?

Student: He holds on the one hand that the first family fathers - the cyclopes - stayed apart from one another. The first fathers in the prepolitical were relatively stable in that the fathers ruled their families without political authority. They do not need political authority because they do not have that much foreign relations with other families. Then when you get these famuli coming in who live closely and break down the fundamental isolation of the family - that there are people in the family but not of it - this poses a problem that the cyclopes can only meet the rebellion of these famuli who are not sons . . .

Strauss: Let us assume an invasion by savage beasts and the individual cyclopes sees that he cannot get rid of them even with the help of his sons. But he sees that with the other five cyclopes, who are also threatened, that they would be better off. Now let us first hear Mr. \_\_\_\_\_.

Student: I thought it was just because each man regarded each other man as his equal and wasn't going to pit his strength against any other.

Strauss: But, still, they might have to pit their strength against third parties. After all, this is a simple thing: that two cyclopes are stronger than one. But what is Vico's objection in principle to this way of looking at it - say the Hobbian way where they shout to each other from their foxholes.

Student: inaudible

Strauss: No. They can't talk. They are not rational. That is the key point. Hobbes presupposes them to be much more rational than they are, and they have to become rational first. Of course, they do not become rational for a long time, but there is something else which is necessary for the transformation into civil beings. That is, in itself, not rational, but it is a condition of rationality and that is some restraint. These bestial peoples have to get the minimum of restraint. And since they are entirely irrational, the restraint is bound to be entirely irrational and that is this superstitious fear. Now this superstitious fear hits some men first and other men later. Those who are hit first by it are the patricians. They are the people with some restraint. And restraint is some superiority - not only bodily superiority. For example, the man who is continually drunk is on the whole weaker, even if he is a boxer, than the man who is not drunk. But it gives not only bodily strength, but also moral strength - the feeling of superiority to the unrestrained. These are the patricians. And out of that, civil society can grow for the first time.

You also referred to natural sociality in this connection, Mr. \_\_\_\_\_. This was also not clear to me.

Student: The way the commonwealth came about, he said, was the natural way.

Strauss: Yes, but this natural sociality was very different from Aristotle.

Student: The reason he says that men are naturally social is that they follow natural customs. And at the same time he says that this was the way the early commonwealths adjusted.

Strauss: Yes, but that is not good enough. When Aristotle says that man is by nature social he means that however primitive and stupid men might have been in early times, they were social animals. I mean there are other social animals - beasts. But man is by nature a social animal. There is no mechanism which makes a previously nonsocial being into a social one. Now what Vico means by man's natural sociality is that there is a mechanism which is necessarily effective and makes man social. So what Vico says, in effect, is that man is by nature asocial, but this mechanism is necessarily effective and makes him social. That's the great difference. And connected with this, of course, is the fact that Vico believes that man is possible without a language, whereas Aristotle denies that. Man cannot have been man without having a language of sorts. It might have been a very limited language. "Go" and "kill" were, I think, the only words Churchill knew when he was in command of the Western frontier over a tribe whose language he did not understand. These two words were absolutely necessary and he learned them.

Student: The thing which makes man social in Vico is necessity, isn't it?

Strauss: Yes, but it is never fully developed yet. I mean, that man is a two-legged animal, for instance. That is presupposed - or two eyes and so forth. That belongs to his constitution, to his primary constitution. But out of this primary constitution there develops a mechanism - sociality. It is derivative. In this case, Spinoza is also helpful. He says somewhere - it is a long time since I read it - after the end of a process, man can be said to be a social animal. This is the result of a process. It is not man's natural constitution. And in this sense, I think that Vico - just like other men - regard man's sociality as acquired.

For the use of the term eternal by Vico I would say, "What does he mean when he speaks of eternal properties?" For example, an eternal property - this patrician/pleb relation.

Student: inaudible

Strauss: Also that.

Student: Or the ruler and the ruled? It seems to me that he is proposing this as a permanent division . . .

Strauss: But he speaks of things which are characteristic only of the very early society. For example, the eternal property of fealty and this kind of thing. What does the eternal mean here? There is not an eternal feudal society. It is only one stage. I think he doesn't mean more than an essential property of this nature: It is not necessary that there be feudalism, but if it is, then it must have these qualities. I do not believe that he means more than that.

Student: But when he says the eternal law of commonwealth, if there be a commonwealth then there must be ruler and ruled.



Strauss: Yes. But it does not mean that there is always a founder.

Student: No, it doesn't.

Strauss: I think it means no more than essential. I mean, I am willing to see this refuted, but as far as I can see he does not mean more.

Then you reflected on this passage where he speaks of political science which rightly impressed you. I think that we will take this up when we come to this passage. In your statement on this subject where you said that even Hobbes had a broader view of political science, you disregarded one point which perhaps is not immediately relevant for political science, but which is surely not altogether irrelevant. Namely this. That Vico does not reject moral philosophy, i.e. the way of life of the wise man as distinguished from the wild man. Wise does not mean the foolish patrician, but the truly wise man. Then he accepts something which Niccolo Machiavelli or someone else like this had said was fundamentally sound. This, I think, he admits. But, indeed, it has no direct relevance for politics because these wise people are so rare that you can, for all practical purposes, disregard them. Regarding this, I believe that his view is very close to that of Spinoza. But I repeat my special satisfaction with your paper.

Now we will turn to the assignment, poetic economy.

Student: Just one question. Do you disagree with Mr. \_\_\_\_\_ on this question of where civil equity belongs - whether it was in the heroic or the third stage? At the beginning didn't you say that you thought that civil equity was in the third stage?

Strauss: Yes. In the human stage.

Student: Because in paragraphs 38 and 39 he very clearly put civil equity in the heroic stage.

Strauss: The Roman jurists spoke of equitable civility and we call it reason of state. Here in paragraph 38. And, of course, the jurists are of course the jurists when Rome was already a monarchy.

Student: Doesn't he say the second state which is the heroic state?

Strauss: Well, let us have a literal translation from Mr. \_\_\_\_\_.

Student: The second one happens to have been the heroic jurisprudence all verbal scrupulosity which was present in the prudent Ulysses. The jurisprudence contemplated by the Roman jurists was called civil equity and which we call reason of state. Through which, on account of their limited ideas, they thought that such right belonged to them naturally which was that the same as we have explained." That's a hard passage. It would have to be studied and cut apart.

Strauss: Yes, I admit that that passage is very difficult. Now which was the other passage which you had in mind?

First Student: Paragraph 39.

Second Student: "The last type of jurisprudence was that of natural equity, which reigns naturally in the free commonwealths, where the peoples, each for its particular good (without understanding that it is the same for all), are led to command universal laws. They naturally desire these laws to bend benignly to the least details of matters calling for equal utility. This is the aequum bonum"

Strauss: Where is this? 39?

Student: Yes, 39. He seems to imply that it was early Roman jurists who spoke of civil equity. That aequum bonum is the natural equity.

Strauss: Yes. Does he call it here natural equity? But here at the end of paragraph 39 he speaks of how Hadrian reformed all the natural right with the human natural law of the provinces, and the human is, of course, that based on equality. Now there is a passage much later where he speaks of that.

Student: 322.

Strauss: Will you find that?

Second Student: It speaks of "The principle of strict law. Its rule is civil equity, by whose certitude, that is to say by the determinate particularity of whose words" and so on.

Strauss: Yes. I see. But let us look at paragraph 329. Here he calls it natural equity. "Natural equity in its best idea was understood by the gentile nations from their very beginnings." And this was a fundamental error naturally. But I think that there was another passage later. No, I cannot find it. I am sorry. For the time being I retract what I said, but if I had anything true in mind I hope it will reassert itself through the natural course of events.

Student: May I say something? It seems that eternal means less than essential. The essential properties manifest themselves eternally.

Strauss: If the thing exists.

Student: Yes, if the thing exists. Vico, in using eternal rather than essential, means to make a weaker assertion.

Strauss: That I do not know. It might, on the contrary - the claim is higher. When he speaks of eternal history it sounds more full than essential history. Shall we postpone it until we come to a passage which explains it?

Now let us turn to our assignment. Let us consider first paragraph 575.

Student: "This is perhaps the reason why emphyteusis is a contract de iure civili, that is, by our principles, de iure heroico romanorum." (by the heroic right of the Romans) "To this Ulpian opposes the natural right of the human people."

Strauss: I would almost translate it "of the humane nations - the humane peoples." Yes?

Student: Was distinguished from that of the barbarous nations that preceded them, not from that of the barbarous nations outside of the Roman empire in his own day, for their law was of no importance to Roman juriconsults."

Strauss: This refers to paragraph 561. Now let us see what he means. The things which the Roman lawyers declared to be de iure civili delivered it from civil right. The law, according to Vico, to the Roman heroic right in contradistinction to the natural right of the humane nations. The question would then arise, "Is, then, the Roman heroic right not natural?" Of course it is natural, but it is a different natural right from that of the humane nations. But, of course, these early Romans - or, for that matter, early Greeks or any other gentiles - did not know that this heroic right which they had was natural. They knew it only as their right inherited from their ancestors. Only philosophy or history coming later can recognize it as natural. Is this clear? We had a paragraph to which Mr. \_\_\_\_\_ referred in which we had a parallel between the private and public. It was a private right of the Romans. I mean, the right peculiar to the Romans; another peculiar to the Greeks. But when we going over the evidence, look at it, we see that there are typical features common to all these early rights and, therefore, we see that there is a natural heroic right. So that, I believe, is not difficult to understand. In paragraph 578, then.

Student: "But when the heroic law was succeeded by what Ulpian defines as that of the human nations"

Strauss: The humane nations.

Student: "the humane nations, there was a revolutionary change. The contract of purchase and sale, which in ancient times did not guarantee recovery unless double recovery was stipulated in the contract, now became the queen of those contracts called bonae fidei, "of good faith," and the right of recovery obtained naturally even without stipulation."

Strauss: Yes. There is a natural element in civil right, of course. And, in a way, it is more natural. This is, I think, what Mr. \_\_\_\_\_ means. That the natural equity, i.e. the equity based on natural reason alone, belongs to the humane nations. Is that what you meant? Yes? Let us see paragraph 582.

Student: "This evident falsehood springs from the common vulgar error of which the scholars have been guilty in interpreting this statement; for it was made by the juriconsults with reference to the nations conquered by the Roman people. For such nations, as we shall later show at greater length, having lost all their civil rights by the law of war, had left to them only natural paternal powers and, consequently, natural blood ties called those of cognation; and similarly only the natural property rights called bonitary; and hence on both these accounts only the natural obligations said to be by the natural right of nations, which Ulpian further specified as humane. But the civil rights those subject nations had lost must all have been possessed by the peoples outside the Roman empire, precisely as the Romans themselves had them."

Strauss: So one can, perhaps, say this. I mean, I am wondering whether that does not agree with what Mr. \_\_\_\_\_ found out. The clear rational right, if I may say so, i.e. the right belonging to humane or civilized peoples is that possessed by the people subjected by the Romans as distinguished from both the Romans and the unconquered nations. Is that the way you understood it?

Student: inaudible

Strauss: But still, he doesn't bring in the question of providence, although it is a legitimate question. These are the natural rights proper because they have been deprived of these civil rights, and they may not even have known it - these savages. But the Roman jurists, who were enlightened men, saw that these natural rights belonged to these conquered people. So, in other words, the true place of natural rights is with the mere plebs.

Student: inaudible

Strauss: In their case a mere promise, say a mere contract, without any particular formality which is binding. In other words, if I made a contract with one of you or you with me, you would keep it as a matter of course. This is what would be right among reasoning beings. But I do not know whether I see through what he means. We must return for a moment to the beginning of this section - 570. Let us read the beginning.

Student: "The heroic peoples were concerned only with the necessities of life. The only fruits they gathered were natural fruits, as they did not yet understand the use of money."

Strauss: He begins here by the most ancient right of the heroic gentiles who did not care except for the necessities and so on.

Student: "They were so to speak all body. Hence the most ancient law of the heroic nations could certainly take no cognizance of the contracts which nowadays are said to be sealed by simple consent."

Strauss: In other words, contracts of good faith.

Student: "They were extremely crude people and therefore suspicious . . . And from this nature of human civil things the following truths emerge."

Strauss: Here we have the oldest right of the heroic gentiles. They were savage to the highest degree. Does this not imply that the heroic age is the same as what is sometimes called the divine age? Because it would seem that the beginning age is the divine age where men were (inaudible) But here this is described as the heroic age. After all, as I have said before, the distinction between these two ages is vouched for only by Egyptian claims. Yes?

Student: He speaks later of some divinities being created by theological thought and others being created by heroic thought. He says that Minerva was created by theological thought. He says in another place that Jove had been created by heroic thought.

Strauss: Yes, but since Jove was the first god . . . But the difficulty is who made these? If you assume that the gods are true

agents - I mean, the gods lived with men as he presented it first. And, then, after the gods there come the heroes, the descendents of the gods. But this is, of course, not accepted by Vico. These gods are products of the human imagination. Do you see that?

Student: Yes. But I don't see where that leads to.

Strauss: Well, the original meaning of the first age is an age where gods lived on earth with men. The second where heroes lived with men - the descendents of gods. And the third is where there are no longer any gods or heroes living on earth, but only men. That is the meaning of the doctrine, the myth, which he adopts. This can, of course, not literally be true for him because there were always only human beings. Is this clear? The first men who imagined Zeus, these were human beings naturally. You would have to say that the first age was the age when men believed in Jupiter, but that is not true because later on - in The Republic - they also believed in Jupiter. What does the distinction of the three ages mean? And the clear distinction is that was an age when men believed in inequality, in a radical inequality. The nobility were thought to be of an entirely different origin than the plebs. And there was a certain time when, from this moment on this inequality was no longer believed in. I believe that is the only distinction which is really important. The question, then, is, "What about the development within that early age?" Now we have here a clear distinction: the prepolitical age - what he calls the state of families, the state of nature - and when they found the first aristocratic commonwealth. Do you see? This distinction is very clear. You had the early aristocracy and then you had democracy and monarchy (illustration on blackboard). Now this is the human age. Would it make sense to say that this is the divine age and this is the heroic age? That is the question. I don't see that. But if this were so then the distinction would simply vary from Vico's own teaching. Of course no longer in the Egyptian sense, but in his sense. But hitherto I have failed to see that it makes sense for him to call this first age - the age of the Cyclopes - the divine age, and the age of the united Cyclopes - the patricians - the heroic age. Maybe he means that. But I have no evidence. I've seen more evidence of a fusion of these two stages. Mr. \_\_\_\_\_?

Student: It seems that when he discusses the creation of the gods and says that the gods were created by men, it shows the confusion between the divine and the human ages because he speaks of theological . . .

Strauss: But you see, this is a very confusing thing, the confusing character of which he was fully aware. On the one hand, he speaks of divine providence and, therefore, the whole thing is ruled by God. But then he speaks also of divine providence in terms of the gods actually believed in by these savages - like Jupiter. And he doesn't believe in a providence exercised by Jupiter or Mercury and so on. These people believed in their stupid gods. There is no question. But Vico does not believe in them. Either you have to rewrite the entire thing in terms of Christian theology or you have to rewrite the entire thing in terms of his new science as the natural science. What is the difficulty?

Student: Well, it just seems to me that when he used the term "theological poets" he meant poets of the theological age.

And when he used the term "heroic poets" he meant poets of the heroic age except that in the context in which he uses it, they are confused. And sometimes the actions of the poets who are said to be of the heroic age come before the poets who are said to be in the theological age.

Stauss: Yes, that is what I mean, that he confuses them. I have reached a somewhat better understanding by this simple schema: If he had meant it this way: The theological age is the age of the isolated cyclopes and the heroic age is the age of the assembled cyclopes - the early aristocracy - then you would have a bipartition corresponding roughly to the bipartition of the divine age and the human age. But since he confuses the bipartition of divine and heroic so frequently - and you just gave another example, theological poets following heroic poets - that I thought it is probably better to disregard it, but I don't claim to have understood this sufficiently. Surely one cannot leave it at the simple Egyptian claim. This much, I think, is clear.

We turn, now, to paragraph 583.

Student: "To return to our argument: . . . After a long period of time they must naturally have chafed under it, by the axiom set forth above that 'subject man naturally aspires to free himself from servitude.'"

Strauss: This "naturally" is very important. It is not lightly taken as a matter of course. Because the whole process is natural. Go on.

Student: "Such must have been the Tantalus . . . for cultivating it and saxum volvere for painfully performing a long and arduous task)"

Strauss: In other words, all the early myths reflect political situations. They had, of course, no logical meaning. The political regime - a kind of pre-Marxism. Yes?

Student: "For all these reasons the famuli must have revolted against the heroes. And this is that "necessity" which we conjectured generally in the Axioms to have been imposed by the famuli upon the heroic fathers in the state of the families, as a result of which the commonwealths were born."

Strauss: So, again, this is a natural necessity. He spoke of natural and here he speaks of necessity. These two axioms to which he refers he doesn't identify as he easily could have done. But there are numbers - Nicolini is supposed to have done the job, and he refers first to paragraph 292 which is radically different from the formulation given here. This formulation doesn't seem to occur at all.

Student: He refers to paragraph 261

Strauss: Well, this is all from Nicolini. Yes, that cannot be done while you translate. That was a lifetime's work. And here in paragraph 261 - let us read that.

Student: "It is characteristic of the strong not to relinquish through laziness what they have acquired by courage. Rather do they yield, from necessity or for utility, as little as they can and bit by bit."

Strauss: He omits the utility. It was the sheer pressure of the plebs. The consideration of utility was implied in the necessity. If we do not begin to discount, we lose everything else we have. That is, I think, very revealing. So it would pay, without any question, if one would consider in each case the axiom which he refers to. That this man who repeats himself ad nauseum doesn't take the trouble to give the reference to the axiom which he uses is a strange procedure.

Now, let us turn to the next paragraph.

Student: "For at this point, under pressure of the emergency, the heroes must naturally have been moved to unite themselves in orders"

Strauss: He changes the expression here. It is not any longer naturalmente, but de natura. "must naturally have been." Yes?

Student: "in orders to as to resist the multitudes of rebellious famuli. And they must have chosen as their head a father fiercer than the rest and with greater presence of spirit. Such men were called reges, 'kings,' from regere, which properly means 'to sustain' or 'direct!'"

Strauss: I will never make any notes about his etymologies, because they are sometimes wrong and sometimes in agreement with what was then regarded to be the true etymology, and sometimes in agreement with what is now known to be the true etymology. That's an infinite quest. Yes?

Student: "In this fashion, to use the well-known phrase of the jurisconsult Pomponius, 'things themselves dictating it, kingdoms were founded'"

Strauss: That is another expression for nature and necessity - rebus ipsis dictantibus. Yes?

Student: "A phrase in keeping with the doctrine of Roman law which declares that the natural law of nations was established by divine providence."

Strauss: You see, divine providence, nature, \_\_\_\_\_ - it's all the same thing. Therefore, it can always be termed both ways. It can be given a pious expression and it can be given a nonpious expression. And you have to make up your own minds which of the expressions is truer to what Vico intends. Yes?

Student: "Such was the generation of the heroic kingdoms. And since the fathers were sovereign kings of their families, the equality of their state and the fierce nature of the Cyclopes being such that no one of them naturally would yield to another, there sprang up of themselves the reigning senates, made up of so many family kings."

Strauss: This is now somewhat confusing. The heroic kings are the kings in the already established famuli. And the divine kings would be the fathers of the prepolitical family. Yes?

Student: "These, without any human discernment or counsel, were found to have united their private interests in common interest called patria"

Strauss: Mr. \_\_\_\_\_ would you give us the literal translation?

Student: Common to each.

Strauss: Common to each. That's a very interesting expression. I will come to that later. Yes, and this was called patria - fatherland. Yes?

Student: "which, the word res being understood, means 'the interest of the fathers!'"

Strauss: "The interest of the fathers." Res patria - the affair of the fathers, the interest of the fathers. And the fatherland is the fathers. The private interest absolutely survives. Yes?

Student: "The nobles were accordingly called patricians, and the nobles must have been the only citizens of the first patriae or fatherlands. In this sense we may regard as truthful the tradition that has come down to us"

Strauss: And so on. Here you see what he does with the tradition. When he, on the basis of his insight into human nature, reaches results which are in conformity with tradition, then the traditions are sound. Otherwise, they have to be radically reinterpreted. So some of the tradition about Sisyphus is false, but properly interpreted - namely, as reflected in the fights between the patricians and the plebians, they make sense. But this tradition of which he is speaking makes sense as it was transmitted. So necessity is the same as nature is the same as \_\_\_\_\_ as the things and the situations themselves, and the same as providence. But since this was constituted as we have seen, without any human counsel, without any human providence, this entitles one, if one wants to speak of providence, to study divine providence.

Now, as for this expression which is so strange - that they united their private interests to the common interest. But he adds "to each one's common interest. I happen to know two parallels to that. One is in Machiavelli in the Discorsi sopra la prima Deca di Livio, first book, when he says, "These things which I believe bring common benefit to each." In other words, the common good must be also each one's private good. Otherwise the private individual lacks the incentive for the common good. The self-interest is fully preserved. And the other expression I encountered in an out of the way place, in Locke's Essay on the Law of Nature edited by Leiden page 206. "\_\_\_\_\_ - the common utility of each." No one, of course, would speak of the common good of each. The meaning is that if it does not remain beneficial to each individual, it will never be respected by them. Yes?

Student: Somewhere in Vico there have been examples where he carries this out and explains the common good as contingent.



Strauss: Sure. Everybody knows that. We have already seen this in his use of the "invisible hand," already in the Autobiography. But, nevertheless, if we come across something which seems to me to be characteristic, I still point it out.

Lecture XII

Vico: The New Science, November 6, 1963

I have read your paper, and I have very little to add now. We have to take up the text to which you referred. There was only one point which had not occurred to me at all and where you may very well be right: that his doctrine implies the denial of innate ideas. Now who is the classic example of the denial of innate ideas? I mean, in the ordinary mythology.

Student: Locke?

Strauss: Yes, Locke. Of course, Hobbes denied it too. But there is a famous saying of Aristotle, or attributed to Aristotle, which, if I remember well says: Nothing is in the intellect which has not previously been in the senses. Does not Vico quote that somewhere?

Student: Yes, he does.

Strauss: Yes, so this would confirm your point. Now, this is, not quite literally true of Aristotle, and one can say that Leibniz has restored the original meaning against this Lockean view: \_\_\_\_\_

"Nothing is in the intellect which has not been in the senses, except the intellect itself. In other words, the principle of contradiction is not derived from any \_\_\_\_\_ that, as it were, the intellect itself. The importance of Locke I recognized before, but this particular point was not clear to me and I am very grateful to you for drawing my attention to it.

Student: inaudible

Strauss: You should try to find this statement and you can do it by looking in the index. Of course, there are many references to Aristotle and it might take you a half an hour to trace it. But I am anxious to restore my reputation with you regarding a subject where I admitted defeat last time: \_\_\_\_\_. I made some effort to trace it and here we are. It concerns civil equity. Paragraph 320.

Student: "Golden is the definition which Ulpian assigns to civil equity: 'a kind of probable judgment, not naturally known to all men' (as natural equity is)"

Strauss: So natural equity does not require any training of the mind. Yes?

Student: "'but to those few who, being eminently endowed with prudence, experience, or learning, have come to know what things are necessary for the conservation of human society'. This is what is nowadays called 'reason of state.'"

Strauss: In more nice terms, \_\_\_\_\_, which in good Italian is called "reason of state." So here that is the passage which I thought of. This theme is developed in the three following paragraphs, but this is, I think, the statement which I had in mind.

Civil equity is, on the highest level at any rate, reason of state. On a lower level this reason of state, i.e. the utility of society, is irrationally interpreted - interpreted on the basis of irrational assumptions, the chief assumption being, of course, the inequality of men. In the heroic society the utility of society is, in fact, the utility of the patricians. In a human society in his sense - nonheroic - where the equality of all men is recognized, it will be the utility of the whole society and not only of the ruling strata. This is the passage which I couldn't find, but which I remembered. Mr. \_\_\_\_\_?

Student: inaudible

Strauss: Leibniz. I do not even remember now if Leibniz even claimed to restore what Aristotle said. In fact he did. That was his criticism of Locke. Locke is quite right, except he forgets the most important thing. Yes?

Student: The passage in Aristotle is 263 in (inaudible)

Strauss: I see. Thank you. Mr. \_\_\_\_\_, take note of that. Mr. \_\_\_\_\_?

Student: I thought before that when you were talking about civil equity you said that civil equity was something which belonged only to the natural state.

Strauss: No. The correction which I have to make on the basis of the passages discussed last time is that there is also a kind of civil equity in the earlier stages. But in this fullest sense as defined by this famous Roman lawyer, Ulpian, it belongs to the human stage.

Student: That I don't see because what he said in the passage which you just read seems to agree perfectly with what he said in paragraph 38.

Strauss: It is not so clear, if you would compare them. Let us not forget the framework around which we are working. (explanation on blackboard) The Egyptians being the age of the gods, the age of the heroes and the age of men. Now this must be rewritten on the basis of what we have learned. The state of nature we can call that the time of the Cyclopes, of families. The heroic stage is that of the aristocracy in the sense defined by him - the assembly of the Cyclopes. The assembly forms a society of patricians. This age is based on the premise that the patricians are a different breed than the plebs. They are descended from the gods. The others are mere human beings, lousy creatures. And then the equality of all men is recognized and that is the human age. Here there is a bifurcation. First democracy and then monarchy. I think we can forget about the Egyptian myth now. This I think we should always keep in mind.

Now, we haven't finished our assignment of last time, and we have to return to paragraph 611 where we have found the clear identification of heroic actions, this criminal action. Now this means, of course, that in the heroic age the heroes didn't know that they were criminals. It was their piety, their morality. But when human reason has developed these actions seem to be criminal. And this is connected with the status of religious intolerance.

Religious intolerance is a heroic concept, i.e. one which is no longer defensible in the human age. This does not mean that it will not still be very powerful.

One could here also refer to paragraph 109 where he said that the natural right of the nations permits civil property to strangers. It permits civil property, that is to say full property and not merely bonitary, full property rights to strangers which is, of course, impossible in the heroic age. This natural right mentioned in paragraph 109 is, of course, a natural right of the human stage. This Vico absolutely leaves to us in each case - to find out which natural right he is speaking of. Who said that to me - was it Mr. \_\_\_\_\_ - that part of the teleology of Vico is, of course, derived from the tradition. As the tradition spoke in (inaudible) in a very complicated and unclear manner of the relation of natural right and the right of the nations (inaudible explanation or blackboard) And, of course, the relation of these things is very obscure. The most famous statement is that of Ulpian according to which the natural right is that which nature taught all families. Like offspring - the generation of offspring and the raising of offspring. And \_\_\_\_\_ is always human, the state of the human. I.e., it is not less natural, but it is limited to humans. You find in Thomas Aquinas' Suma in the second part, question 57. Thomas Aquinas reconciled the Roman law distinction with the Aristotelian teaching about natural right. That is, perhaps, the most important text.

Now what does Vico do? Vico takes over this term, obviously - right of the nations. If you would retranslate it into Italian you would get that. And he says they are identical. But what does he do? In the first place he translates \_\_\_\_\_ differently. That doesn't mean the nations, it means the gentiles. And the second thing which is, in a way, as important is that he says that there are n rights of the gentiles. Here, here and here. But that he chooses the traditional terminology which evokes recollection is, of course, one of the tricks - as Tacitus said somewhere, quoted by Bacon in a very visible place - \_\_\_\_\_. Then Augustus made this complete change from the pre-commonwealth to the despotisms we can almost say. But the name of the magistracies remains the same. So the name remains the same, but the meaning is radically different.

So we have to be awake all the time. Even when he speaks of civil equity we have to ask, "Which civil equity does he mean now?" But one can say that civil equity means always reason of state, but it may mean reason of state irrationally interpreted or reason of state rationally interpreted as the Roman lawyers did it and as Vico himself would want to understand it.

Let us now turn to paragraph 629 or did you have another point, Mr. \_\_\_\_\_?

Student: In discussing these developments - that body of Roman law - the Cambridge History points out that it developed as the (inaudible) attempted to form a law dealing with matters between Roman citizens and foreigners. As it turned out, in time this body of law affected the civil law so that, in a way, Vico talks about this. That the particular law of the heroic stage was in time affected by the gentile law of the third, human stage. It seems that this notion of lei gensium is very important

Strauss: Sure. There is no question. But the medieval distinction between \_\_\_\_\_ and natura is, of course, not necessarily the original meaning. And the original meaning is that, what you said. But, nevertheless, it has something to do with it because being was a \_\_\_\_\_ in deciding questions among foreigners or among Roman citizens and foreigners. Of course, very much in matters of trade, naturally. It was much less formalistic and was guided by natural equity. By equity and not by the complicated Roman laws. Therefore, the key question is regarding contracts. The bona fide contract is a contract and which was not recognized in the old Roman civil law. So it was more rational than the Roman law, than the proper civil law. To that extent it makes sense to identify the \_\_\_\_\_ with the natura because it is guided only by what the things themselves dictate and not by any complicated notions of a sacred nature.

Now, let us turn to paragraph 629. It is a very long paragraph, but I think we should read it.

Student: "We have seen that the generation of commonwealths began in the age of the gods, in which governments were theocratic, that is, divine."

Strauss: You see the ambiguity. In what sense they were divine. They believed in gods. Gods were regarded as the rulers although, in fact, it was a human government. Yes?

Student: Later they developed into the first human, that is the heroic, governments, here called human to distinguish them from the divine.

Strauss: In other words, they are not truly human according to the final terminology. You see, we have to watch all the time. According to the final terminology they are, of course, not human because they are not aware of the equality of all men. Go on.

Student: "Within these human governments, even as the mighty current of a kingly river retains far out to sea the momentum of its flow and the sweetness of its waters, the age of the gods continued to run its course, for that religious way of thinking must still have persisted by which whatever men themselves did was attributed to the agency of the gods."

Strauss: Let us stop here for one moment. This simile, by the way, occurs also at the beginning of paragraph 412. Why that is so I do not know. So the religious way of thinking - a very modern way of expression. "The religious way of thinking lasted still." It lasted still. The question is, "Will it last forever?" This religious way of thinking surely affects Vico's way of presenting things. What does the religious way of thinking assert? That the gods have made everything. But what would follow from this premise according to a well-known principle of Vico? If the gods have made everything?

Student: Only the gods could understand.

Strauss: Yes, or positively stated?

Student: The new science would not be possible.

Strauss: No knowledge is possible because we can only know what we have made. If the gods have made everything, we cannot understand anything. But men have made commonwealths, as he also asserts. Therefore, the new science is possible in contradistinction to natural science which officially is not possible. But the religious way of thinking ascribes the making of commonwealths to the gods.

Now Vico himself does this by tracing it to providence. I think we see quite well here what he is doing. Now, go on.

Student: "Herein is divine providence to be supremely admired, for, when men's intentions were quite otherwise, it brought them in the first place to the fear of divinity."

Strauss: Yes, that we know already. That is a reminder in the context of the old story, private vice leading to public benefit is the proof of the invisible hand. And, somewhat later, after the middle of this paragraph, when he speaks - that was the passage discussed last time by Mr. \_\_\_\_\_ about the political science. If I remember well it is the first reference to political science which occurs. And you made quite a comment about it. Read this passage.

Student: "Hence emerges the subject matter of political science, which is nothing other than the science of commanding and obeying the cities."

Strauss: Mr. \_\_\_\_\_ made a comment on it which I do not remember in all the details, but it was based on the disregard of one very simple thing. Because this meaning of political science, you can say, was an original meaning. Where the term episteme, occurs in Plato in some of the dialogues it has no other meaning than the knowledge of governing societies. This knowledge includes, of course, the knowledge of how to make people obey and, therefore, also the knowledge of obeying. There is no difficulty in this terminology. The conclusions which you have drawn from it would need more substantiation. Now, one can say that since Vico was not particularly concerned with this antiquarian question of what political science meant originally, and since this new science is somehow overlapping with what what traditionally - not initially, but traditionally - called political science, maybe you are right that by these words he asserts that political science in the traditional sense has to be replaced by the new science. At least this is what you said.

Student: inaudible

Strauss: Oh, I see. That I did not connect. Yes, this is completely right. In other words, Vico, you can say, restates the crudest notion existing at the beginning, not the much more elevated notion which Aristotle presents. That is quite correct. But one can, of course, say that he replace political science in the traditional sense, including the Hobbian sense which you so rightly pointed out, by the new science which is not a political science. Why is it not a political science proper?

Student: Because it is something which investigates.

Strauss: Yes. More simply, because it is not normative. The political science including Hobbes and, of course, Machiavelli, is normative. It shows how one should act politically and how people should govern. Here he only shows how people did, in fact govern in the various different ages. That is absolutely defensible, but there is only one corollary to add. If you know what belongs to each of these stages, say the human stage in contradistinction to the heroic stage, then you can, of course, criticize any relics of the earlier stages not belonging to it. Do you see that?

A merely descriptive science is, in fact, not possible because this descriptive science is always addressed to political beings who necessarily draw conclusions. Take any factors today - integration, segregation, slums and so on. They can all be descriptive statements, but they hit people who have interest and who synthesize and generalize from these mere facts. Therefore, it is simply a swindle or naivete to believe that there can be mere factual findings without political consequences. To that extent, of course, Vico was (inaudible), but still, the core of his teaching is, indeed, not normative.

Later on, towards the end of the paragraph he speaks of Polyphemus and Ulysses - would you read that section?

Student: "(and in this giant Plato recognizes the fathers of the families in the so-called state of nature preceding the civil state)."

Strauss: You see, "so-called." That refers to the fact that the state of nature was not such a matter of course when Vico wrote this as it has become since, especially in the textbooks where people don't hesitate to speak of Epicurus' teaching of the state of nature. You can read Epicurus and he never mentions the term, of course. And, to mention another case, some individual - I'm sorry some writer (although I think individual is a perfectly legitimate term today it has this connotation) - attacked my interpretation of Locke on the grounds that it is all in Hooker. The state of nature. And he even refers to a paragraph in Hooker so that it is easy to find. I had read it before, but I looked it up and, of course, Hooker never speaks of the state of nature. The state of nature was an innovation in political theory and Vico is aware of it and so he says "The state which they call the state of nature." In this terminology, these are all states of nature because each of these stages has been generated by natural necessity

Now, please read the end of this paragraph.

Student: "Providence therefore, by the aforesaid aristocratic form of their governments, led them to unite themselves to their fatherlands in order to preserve such great private interests as their family monarchies were (for this was what they were entirely bent upon)

Strauss: Absolutely. That was the concern - the defense of their private interests. Yes?

Student: "and thus, beyond any design of theirs, they were brought together in a universal civil good called commonwealth."

Strauss: Yes, but this common good is an outcome of nothing but the private good. We have heard this very often. We find here only a confirmation of this.

Now, then, let us turn to the next paragraph. We cannot read this all. Begin roughly where he speaks of Epicurus and Zeno.

Student: "among those very men who are said by Epicurus to have been born of chance and by Zeno to have been creatures of necessity."

Strauss: Zeno means Stoicism.

Student: "Yet chance did not divert them nor fate force them out of this natural order. For at the point when the commonwealths were to spring forth, the matter was all prepared and ready to receive the form, and there came forth the formation of the commonwealths, composed of mind and body. The prepared materials were these men's own religions"

Strauss: That should read "The prepared matters" to keep the terminology. Yes?

Student: "their own languages, their own lands, their own nuptials . . . with such wisdom as could naturally exist in that time of extreme crudeness and simplicity."

Strauss: You see how careful you have to be. He speaks of the wisdom of the patricians. Yes, they were wise, but with what wisdom. One would here expect the following thought: The matter of commonwealths is the private, what he calls here the proper. That we have seen. Proper lands, proper religions, proper languages repeated seven or eight times. The matter of commonwealths is the peculiar, the private. The form should be the common which providence brings out of the private or adds to the private things. But instead he says that the form is brought out by the very human wisdom of the fathers. So here we have a perfectly nontheological presentation. You need matter and form. The matter was there: The families each with its own rights etc. And then the form is brought out by that kind of wisdom available at the time. This is perfectly sufficient for understanding the first civil society.

In the next paragraph we find also some very interesting remarks about the state of nature, of the natural rights. We should also read that.

Student: "Yet here is an even greater cause for marveling. By bringing about the birth of the families (all of them born with some awareness of a divinity although, because of their ignorance and disorder, none knew the true one), since each family had its own religion, language, lands, nuptials, name, arms, government and laws, providence had at the same time brought into being the natural law of the major nations"

Strauss: Yes, then he speaks again of the natural right of the major gentiles or families. Yes, go on.

Student: "with all the aforesaid properties. . . at the time when they banded themselves together in a natural order against the latter,"



Strauss: Let us stop here. You see again the variety: the various kinds or various stages of natural right. Each stage is natural, as natural as the other. The order of aristocracy is as natural as the state of nature. You have heard this often, but we cannot emphasize it too much.

In the next paragraph he suggests that the natural right of the gentiles, of the nations, is practically identical with the civil, sovereign power which includes not only government and its powers, but also land and religion. We can bring this into harmony with what was said before by saying that the rights of sovereignty as understood in a fundamentally Hobbian way by him, is the natural public law. But this natural public law will not, of course, be in existence before there are civil societies. But once there is a civil society it has these powers naturally. It is the natural public doctrine. That is all included in natural right. One could even perhaps say that Vico's doctrine of natural right is fundamentally a doctrine of natural public right, at least the emphasis is much more on that than on private right.

In paragraph 633 it appears that the natural right of the gentiles is also known as divine right. Let us read paragraph 633.

Student: "What we have here set forth, added to what we have mentioned above of the heroes of the first cities calling themselves gods, will explain the meaning of the phrase iura a diis posita, 'laws laid down by the gods,' applied to the dictates of the natural right of nations. But when the natural right of human nations ensued, on which we have cited Ulpian"

Strauss: Yes, one could even say, "of humane nations," and make it quite clear. Yes?

Student: "and upon which the philosophers and moral theologians based their understanding of the natural right of fully unfolded eternal reason, the phrase was fitly reinterpreted to mean that the natural right of nations was ordained by the true God."

Strauss: But, of course, here he translates "nations." He should also translate "gentiles." I mean, either "gentes" means gentiles and should always mean that - and, of course, in the latter case it means all nations showing the ambiguity. The philosophers and moral theologians deal only with the natural right of the humane nations. But the other rights - the preceding ones of the heroic age, for example - is as natural as that. The question, of course, would be: To what extent does the natural right of the humane nations include the natural right of the earlier ages? Especially in the case of religion.

Now, let us go to paragraph 636, the ancient teaching regarding robbery and piracy which according to the heroic point of view were not criminal. There are proofs from Plato, Aristotle and Thucydides. Will you read the end of the paragraph?

Student: "What is more remarkable is that the highly civilized Greeks, in the times of their most cultivated humanity, should have practiced such a barbarous custom, which indeed provided them with almost all the subjects of their comedies. It is perhaps because of this custom, still practiced by the inhabitants against the

Christians, that the coast of Africa facing us is called the Barbary."

Strauss: Now Algiers and other places. But the question is this: Since the republic is now the Christian republic, one has to consider what is right as between Christians and non-Christians in contradiction, say, between Italians and French. What is the position regarding robbery and piracy on the part of Christian governments or against non-Christian governments. Or you don't have to go so far - between Protestants and Catholics. Think of Drake. The famous Drake. When he made this heretical act against the Spanish fleet, was this regarded as criminal? No. So, you see, some of these heroic things still survived.

The beginning of the next paragraph.

Student: "The principle of this oldest law of war was the inhospitality of the heroic peoples which we have discussed above."

Strauss: You remember this discussion. We came across it. Consider especially paragraph 396 where he spoke of the inhospitality of the Jews, in particular. Now given this inhospitality of the Jews, it must reflect to similar institutions to those of the inhospitable early gentiles. That is, I think, clear.

Now, let us turn to paragraph 639.

Student: "Now the heroic custom of holding strangers to be eternal enemies, which was observed by each people privately in peace, when extended abroad, took the form recognized as common to all the heroic nations of carrying on eternal wars with each other, with continual looting and raiding. Thus from the cities, which Plato tells us were born on the basis of arms,"

Strauss: You can read the rest of that. Let us now turn to paragraph 644.

Student: "Only by understanding this nature of human civil affairs and in no other way can we solve the amazing problem of Spain."

Strauss: Actually, we can state the point in simple words. The early nations were collective cyclopes almost as cannibalistic as was as we have heard before. In paragraph 645 he refers to Thucydides' remark about this early time and calls him the most accurate and most sapient writer. I believe that no one has been given such an epithet before. Surely not Moses. This shows very well what I think he is driving at.

Now let us turn to paragraph 655 where he interprets a myth about Penelope. Let us read the end of paragraph 654 where Penelope prostituted herself. Mr. \_\_\_\_\_?

Student: Just one question. The fact that he doesn't give any great praises or use any superlative adjectives about Moses since Moses had a different title . . .

Strauss: Yes, we know that. And it is possible to give a perfectly innocent explanation of the fact that he quotes quite a few other writers' sayings as "golden" sayings and not those of Moses, because it is, in a way, impudent to praise the holy writers.

That can be defended. But why does he, nevertheless, in two passages call Moses' sayings "golden?" If this is an act of impudence to call any passage of the Bible golden because man then makes of himself, as it were, the arbiter of holy writ, that is a very good point. But the two exceptions show that this is not so simple.

Student: `Can you carry that over to any praise or nonpraise of Moses?

Strauss: Yes. By this step. He has praised Moses, after all, although for some sayings regarding irrelevant material, that is irrelevant from the point of view of the Bible - what Moses says about the Egyptians. These are not the only reasons. We have to consider also the facts to which Mr. \_\_\_\_\_ referred again - the chronological problems. The Biblical chronology and history and all this kind of thing. Yes, Mr. \_\_\_\_\_?

Student: He treats no one more sacredly than this Varro who he praises consistently and at one point calls "the wisest man in the age of Cicero."

Strauss: Yes, I see. Varro was, of course, invaluable to him as an antiquarian, but he could not possibly regard him as a man of the best judgment, and it makes absolute sense that he selects Thucydides for this highest position. I mean, that is somehow the modern tradition. Towards the end of this modern stage, one could almost say, Nietzsche towards the end of his life, in a very long passage. For Plato - Thucydides. That is the peak. That belongs to that modern tradition. Not men as they ought to be, but the analysis of men as they are.

Now, the end of paragraph 654.

Student: "In other versions Penelope prostitutes herself to the suitors (signifying the extension of connubium to the plebs) and gives birth to Pan, a monster of two discordant natures, human and bestial"

Strauss: In other words, this union of the plebian and the patrician from a patrician point of view is monstrous. Naturally. Even today some people regard mixed alliances as monstrous. Yes?

Student: "This is precisely the creature secum ipse discors of Livy, for the Roman patricians told the plebeians that, if they were to share with them the connubium of the nobles, the resulting offspring would be like Pan, a monster of two discordant natures brought forth by Penelope who had prostituted herself to the Plebeians."

Strauss: Yes. The next paragraph.

Student: "From Pasiphae, who has lain with a bull, the minotaur, a monster of two diverse natures. This story must mean that the Cretans extended connubium to foreigners"

Strauss: We can leave it at that. This has very great implications which cannot possibly be brought out without considering another passage. Paragraph 657 when he comes to the royal arms of France in the second part of the paragraph.

Student: "Hence the royal arms of France (in signification of the Salic law which excludes women from inheriting that kingdom) are supported by two angels clothed in dalmatics and armed with spears, and are adorned with the heroic motto: "The lilies do not spin."

Strauss: What he has immediately in mind is, of course, particularly the lower status of women in the heroic age. But is there more to what he said than you suspect. I simply do not know enough of the affair of the French arms - whether they do have the circumscription "Lilies do not spin." I simply do not know. I have not heard it before and I have no easy way of finding out. So if anyone knows anything about it, it would be very helpful for us. But however this may be, he calls this word a "heroic word." Now you know where this word comes from. The New Testament. But here it is used only in reference to these alleged or real subscription of the French arms of the royal house. But if we look at the New Testament where the thing comes from, then the New Testament itself would be a document of heroic morality. This is very interesting, and I must admit that I have not found any evidence for that here, if this is evidence at all. But I know this from Machiavelli, an author whom Vico knew very well indeed. Now in Machiavelli's Discourses as a whole this is, one can say, a major theme, if not the most important theme. To give an account in terms of his political wisdom of the Bible. I have written a whole book about it, and so I shall not explain it. Very briefly, Livy takes the place of the Bible. Livy is his Bible. Livy has two functions. First, as a kind of counter-Bible, of course. His authority. And, on the other hand, just as he demolishes the authority of Livy in the book, there preceded the whole work of Machiavelli a demolition of the authority of the Bible. And what he does to Livy - the demolition of Livy's authority - has its counterpart in an unwritten demolition of Biblical authority or written in the Discourses in invisible ink.

Now, there are quite a few specimens of that. For example, there are two kinds of captains. As you know, vice is presented in Christian theology as a captain. I do not know how far this goes back, but it was common in Machiavelli's age. So there are two kinds of captains. One is like \_\_\_\_\_ - that man who commands the \_\_\_\_\_, particularly severe. And this man is described by Livy - and Machiavelli takes over this description - as having one defect. He was of heavy tongue just as Moses, according to the Bible. He had, therefore, Aaron as his speaker.

And then there is another kind of captain who is young and gentle. Valerius Corvinus is one of them and this corresponds, I think, to \_\_\_\_\_. He uses, in other words, with incredible cleverness, all kinds of things in Livy which have, of course, nothing to do with the question of Judaism and Christianity. There is one passage which is particularly interesting. \_\_\_\_\_, one of the patricians who fought for the plebs and was by the patricians thrown down the Rock. That is really unbelievable. When Livy speaks of that - what happened to \_\_\_\_\_ - and he was, of course, revered by the plebs who he tried to help, Livy used the expression sangre, the blood of the savior, \_\_\_\_\_. This is very, very clever. In brief, I believe that is a part of Vico's background. Later on, through Marxism of course, these things became very popular. The plebian revolt against the rule of priests in the Jewish community connected with Jesus.

For Vico this must be a great question for the following reason. You get the Middle Ages. And the middle ages is, as you know, based on a new barbarism of the Northern tribes. Just as you have a feudalism in early Rome, you have feudalism in the Middle Ages. But in the Middle Ages the situation is, of course, very different because you have also a carry-over from other traditions and especially Christianity which was not of Northern origin. And this is for him a very great problem.

Now I believe that this passage which we read before in paragraph 159 when he speaks of the situation in the Middle Ages. You have, on the one hand, just heroic things like Homer. You know the romance of the Middle Ages, the praise of heroes and all this kind of thing. And the story of Charlemagne and King Arthur and so on. And at the same time you have the most sophisticated scholasticism which doesn't fit that heroic character of the Middle Ages at all. These are, I think, elements of what Vico truly thought about the Medieval period, a period which is, of course, continued to some extent up to his own time.

I believe that there are also references to this question in the following paragraphs. Let us, perhaps, read paragraph 658.

Student: "Finally Hercules breaks into a fury on being stained by the blood of the centaur Nessus. . . Livy must have found the phrase in some ancient chronicler whom he follows with as much good faith as ignorance."

Strauss: I believe that this has more than one meaning. But let us finish this paragraph.

Student: "For when the plebeian debtors were freed . . . It was practiced with greater mildness by the Hebrews, among whom debtors served only seven years."

Strauss: I think that is fairly clear. He gives, of course, a sop. The Hebrews practiced greater mildness, but it is, of course, the same. Now, if there is a heroic period with the Hebrews, then everything else follows. I think that this whole paragraph gives a good indication of how he would read the Bible, especially the Old Testament. Very late composition. Moses is much later than the composer of Job - the writer of the book of Job, as we have seen on an earlier occasion. But very old data, no longer understood by the compiler of the book.

And in paragraph 660 he makes clear that the heroic contests, i.e. between patricians and plebians - were, of course, also in Phoenicia, Egypt, and Phrygia.

What about the Jews in Egypt? Were these not a kind of Egyptian plebs who rebelled against the Egyptian rulers? Must this not be understood in the same way? These are, of course, merely suggestions and to substantiate them we would have to know much more than we do at present.

In paragraph 663. Start at the beginning.

Student: "Taking the word people in the sense of recent times and applying it to the earliest times of the world of the cities

(because of the inability of philosophers and philologists alike to imagine such severe aristocracies) has led to misunderstandings"

Strauss: Here Vico makes clear what he claims to be his crucial innovation. Hitherto no one had any understanding of the early aristocracies. Neither the philosophers nor the philologists. But, of course, there remains a question. He refers himself to what Plato said in the third book of the Laws about \_\_\_\_\_ as the first stage and how out of these early societies the first cities grew. But surely it is not developed by Plato on the basis of such axioms as he poses at the beginning.

To repeat this again, what is the difference? For Plato it is clear that men were always reasoning beings. Perhaps on the basis of very poor data, and perhaps reasoning badly, but it was always reasoning. Whereas Vico says that there was a stage when men had only sense, imagination and passion, and no reason. No universals. For Plato there can never have been mute human beings. That is impossible. For Vico there were such mute human beings. That is a fundamental difference. And, of course, also from Aristotle.

Now in paragraph 665 the traditional view of Rome - this was the paragraph very important for Mr. \_\_\_\_\_ and I think quite rightly. Now, I will try to give my interpretation and you correct me, Mr. \_\_\_\_\_. The traditional view of Rome presupposes that the Romans had a privilege from God, i.e. were the elect nation. For even the Greeks - people of outstanding intelligence and humanity - had no knowledge of their antiquity. Hence, how could the Romans have had it except on the basis of such a special privilege? Now the fact that the Jews had perfect knowledge of their antiquity, in fact of the creation of the world, is a special act of divine grace and this is perfectly compatible with the possibility that they were a crude and barbarous nation far inferior to the Greeks. The Romans had such a perfect knowledge of their past although they were such a rude and barbarous nation. The application to the Jews is obvious.

He argues on the basis of the assumption - which he regards as absurd - that the Romans did have perfect knowledge of their antiquity. But this is impossible.

Now you made quite a few more remarks about this paragraph. Can you restate the more important ones which I omitted?

Vico: The New Science, November 10, 1963

This was a very good paper. I think that this is the first paper that you ever wrote for me. Now you mentioned quite a few of the important points and I will limit myself to those which form a unity. What you stated at the beginning about the way you wrote your paper was very sensible. That is the only way to proceed, to see as much as one can see.

Now you spoke of Vico's treatment of myth. How was myth treated prior to Vico according to Vico himself? You mentioned one thing, namely the simple rejection of myth as nonsense which rejection he rejects. But this is the least interesting. There is another one which he also rejects, and you refer to that. What was the other treatment of myth which he also rejects?

Student: Well, the religious . . .

Strauss: Well, as containing profound, philosophic wisdom. That he also rejects. And this is, in a way, much more important for him than those who merely reject myth as nonsense.

What, then, does he do with myth if he is dissatisfied with the previous treatment of myth?

Student: I think that he is trying to restore the credibility by giving it a different interpretation.

Strauss: What kind of an interpretation? I mean, why is myth so important to Vico? After all, he does not believe in all this.

Student: inaudible

Strauss: So, in other words, the myths are not important as literally true nor as containing philosophic wisdom, but as documents of early human thought. Why is he so interested in early human thought or heroic thought, as he calls it?

Student: He wants to understand the origins and the way in which the civilization has emerged. inaudible

Strauss: Still, since he is a philosopher, why this great concern with the early stages in which men were unable to philosophize? The bulk of the work is devoted to the early men. What was the most obvious alternative in his time for a political philosopher? He uses the term all the time. Natural right. Why does the problem of natural right lead to this approach? Is there anyone in the class who can answer that question which we have discussed more than one time?

Student: When we come to natural right we see that there is not just one natural right. There are many natural rights.

Strauss: Yes. In other words, the whole approach to natural right is wrong because there are n natural rights and the proof of that is supplied by the New Science.

This study of myth - of early human thought - is underlying his search for the true Homer. You pointed out the fact that this section on the true Homer either doesn't exist or plays a very insignificant role in the earlier presentations of Vico's doctrine. Here it has a considerable role. How can one state this more neatly - that it plays a considerable role?

Student: If Homer does present . . .

Strauss: No. I mean the fact that this search for the true Homer is a very important part of Vico's doctrine in its final version. A quite external fact - the first plan.

Student: inaudible

Strauss: Something very superficial, but also very striking.

Student: inaudible

Strauss: That is very good. I did not even think of that. But this Frontispiece is a very enigmatic thing also. But something very obvious. The book consists of five books. The third, i.e. the center book, belongs to Homer. If this position is of some importance for Vico's way of writing which I believe it is, although this is not sufficiently settled. So it is externally the center part of Vico's teaching.

What is Vico's discovery regarding Homer? You mentioned that. Homer is not an individual, a poet, but the true Homer is the folk mind. That one can say. And that was, indeed, an epoch-making thing. The whole 19th century and, to some extent, even the 20th century is still affected by that. The folk mind. Romanticism. Primarily German romanticism is expressed by this idea of the folk mind.

But, still, is Vico a romantic? I mean, is it true that he prefers the folk - one can almost say the folk sentiment - to thinking, to rational thought? Can one say that? I think that you gave an answer to your question yourself, but it is not quite clear.

Student: inaudible      In the first part he indicated that there were two Homers.

Strauss: Yes, but this would not affect that. I do not know exactly what experts would say today. When I studied it was still with the bold men who said that the Iliad was written by one man and the Odyssey by another. I think that at that time only J.V. Scott, an American scholar, dared to say that there was only one poet Homer who composed both the Iliad and the Odyssey. This was the traditional view, more or less. And the ordinary view was that these two works were written by very different poets at very different times, and then it was put together in the age of . . . Probably the compiler was a very mediocre fellow. Therefore, the many stupidities in the whole thing. Scott answered very simply and rhetorically powerfully. He said, "Who is a better judge of an epic poem - or other famous classical scholars or Milton, Goethe, Vergil?" And the answer is implied in the question. But still, this great change in Homeric criticism - and this is, by the way, one of Vico's titles to fame in the ordinary



historiography - that he was the one who put Homer criticism and therewith fundamentally all earlier poetry and therewith by implication all poetry on an entirely new basis by the discovery of the folk mind. But I repeat my question. Does Vico come down on the side of those who prefer the sentiment of the people to the thought of the few?

Student: According to his own theory he doesn't seem to. He speaks of poetry as the sense of mankind and philosophy as the intellect.

Strauss: Yes, this could follow. You could very well have the same distinction between sense and intellect, and say that sense is much better than this pale derivative intellect. Many people have said this in our age and in the 19th century.

Student: But I don't think he says that.

Strauss: No. I think that one can even prove it. In other words, Vico discovers, so to speak, the romantic possibility, but he does not share it. He comes down on the side of the intellect very clearly, I think.

Now in this connection you mentioned his occasional statement that the poets are few in number, like the philosophers. And how can this jive with the notion of a poetic nation? Apparently, there is a difficulty even here. I think that the difficulty is simply this: when he speaks of the theological poets - the earliest poets - then he means indeed men. But Homer is not a theological poet. He is an heir to the theological poets. We will come to that later.

And the last point which I would like to make right away is this. You referred to his reference to Christ. That was the first reference in the whole book and there is only one other which we will come across next time. And just as we have two explicit references to Christ, so we have two references to the golden sayings of Moses. So for a man who claims to be a strict Catholic, his nonuse of the Bible is remarkable. That is surely true.

Now there was another case - a much more important case - of this kind of Homeric problem which had been discussed before Vico started his work, and that is Moses. Yes?

Student: inaudible

Strauss: Yes, the two Isaiahs are a later thing. But Moses is the most important thing. Spinoza claimed to have proof that Moses could not have written the Pentateuch on the basis of philological evidence. Who wrote the Pentateuch according to Spinoza? Ezra. That is very late - 5th century. So you have a similar problem here. The "Moses" in the sense of the author of the Pentateuch is not the Moses spoken about in the Pentateuch. Even Croce in his work on Vico refers to the fact that Spinoza's criticism of the Old Testament must have played a considerable role for Vico. But he thinks that Vico was affected by it, as it were, only methodically without much regard regarding the Old Testament itself which I, for one, cannot believe. There is much more, I believe, regarding the Biblical question in Vico's discussion of

Homer than it would seem. Not that Homer was unimportant for him, but the Bible was, of course, much more important. Because, after all, no claims about the guidance of human life were raised on behalf of Homer. Homer was not, in this sense, an authority.

Now we have a backlog from last time. We will try our best to get rid of that. Now we read last time up to paragraph 688 and we should now read paragraph 689. I remind you only of what we read in paragraph 688. The poetic theologians - that is to say, the earliest human beings who can be said to be human beings, the cyclopes were the poetic theologians - had the same theme as Vico - the human world. But they lacked physics. Hence they did not understand the world of nations which they, in a way, created. Now let us turn to paragraph 689.

Student: "At length the sky broke forth in thunder, and Jove thus gave a beginning to the world of men by arousing in them the impulse which is proper to the liberty of the mind, just as from motion, which is proper to bodies as necessary agents, he began the world of nature. For what seems to be impulse in bodies is but insensible motion, as we said above in the Method."

Strauss: Let us stop here. Now again, Mr. \_\_\_\_\_, do you have the text? Now what is the subject of " \_\_\_\_\_ ?" Jove or \_\_\_\_\_ de la natura?

Student: I think it could be an independent sentence the same as \_\_\_\_\_.

Strauss: And how would you translate \_\_\_\_\_ ?

Student: The world of nature begun.

Strauss: Yes, that is how I understood it. That is, at least, ambiguous. Who began motion? Jove or the world of nature? Or, rather, motion or Jove?

Now this matter of the liberty of the mind in contradistinction to necessary agents we have already discussed before. How can there be freedom of the mind in the stage where man is an absolute plaything of the imagination and passion, and does not have reason? We have discussed this before.

Let us turn now to the beginning of paragraph 692. Yes?

Student: Is this impulse wonder or fear?

Strauss: \_\_\_\_\_. The recipient motion. But which he tries to limit to the mind. He says the \_\_\_\_\_ which is peculiar to the freedom of the matter. We have had parallels to that before.

Student: Isn't it that the word \_\_\_\_\_ was what began with the word \_\_\_\_\_? Then what gave impulse to the motion? Because many times he uses . . .

Strauss: But how would you render this thought in the form of a sentence? The subject or predicate?

Student: inaudible

Strauss: The world of nature began from motion. Period. That is exactly what I mean. But one doesn't know was if Jove was involved in that as he is involved in the creation of the world of men.

Student: One doesn't know because you don't know where loco began.

Second Student: inaudible

Strauss: Yes. That is true. To say nothing of the fact that in the most orthodox construction of the sentence he would replace God by Jove.

Now the beginning of paragraph 692.

Student: "But the greatest and most important part of physics is the contemplation of the nature of man."

Strauss: "Of physics," i.e. you cannot have the new science except on the basis of physics. This is a question which we have frequently come across. Now let us read the entire paragraph.

Student: "We have set forth above in the Poetic Economy how the founders of gentile humanity in a certain sense generated and produced in themselves the proper human form in its two aspects: that is, how by means of frightful religions and terrible paternal powers and sacred ablutions they brought forth from their giant bodies the form of our just corporature, and how by the discipline of their household economy they brought forth from their bestial minds the form of our human mind."

Strauss: Yes, you see here that the form of our human mind was worked out of the bestial minds by humans. That is all we need here.

Paragraph 695. This has to be read in connection with parts of 694. But let us see. The other part of the soul. The theological poets put it in the air. Now, the end of the paragraph. . .

Student: "And the theological poets, again with a just sense, put the course of life in the course of the blood, on whose proper flow our life depends."

Strauss: Those theological poets were, of course, materialists or corporealists as we could very well say. If you read paragraph 694 you will see that this will only confirm it.

A few more points. At the end of paragraph 701.

Student: "In a rough way they understood that concupiscence is the mother of all the passions, and that the passions have their dwelling in our humors."

Strauss: This is, of course, a somewhat ambiguous sentence, but it might very well suggest a very corporealistic interpretation of the passions as Descartes and Hobbes had before dealt with them. This much about the physics problem.

Now in paragraph 703. This is a very strange paragraph. Let us read that as a whole.

Student: "Now, since the minds of the first men of the gentile world. . . as Terence does when he says, 'We have attained the life of the gods.'"

Strauss: In other words, he doesn't say, "like." Yes?

Student: "This sentiment, though proper to him who speaks, still has the air of a common sentiment because of the Latin usage of plural for singular in the first person. However, in another comedy of the same poet, this sentiment is raised to the highest degree of sublimity by being made singular and appropriated to him who expresses it: 'I am become a god.'"

Strauss: Now what does this mean? He refers here to that fact which Aristotle made famous, that children call all men fathers and all women mothers. In other words, they do not have a concept of man and woman. They know only Dad and Mom, these almost inarticulate sounds, and they must do for men and women. This is surely part of the argument. But it is not clear what these three quotations mean, these three poetic quotations. Does he mean to say that the god is the beloved, whatever the beloved may be? I do not know. I do not understand this paragraph. It is one of the many enigmatic paragraphs in the book.

Student: In referring to the degrees of sublimity and the fact that the ancient theological poets were called sublime, there seems to be some connection between the sublimity and the fact that the poets were creators and that they were singled out by the gods.

Strauss: Yes. That goes somehow in the direction in which I am groping. He says later on, and he may have said somewhere before, you know when he calls the first age the age of the gods and this means both that they created the gods and that they were the gods. I think it is connected with that. And poetry, in a way, seems to preserve that. Because Terence, of course, is not an early poet, a theological poet. He is a late, comic poet. Yes?

Student: This reminds me of something I am curious about. He must have known the theory about the . . . I wonder why he never preaches it.

Strauss: Would you tell your less learned colleagues what the theory of the . . . is?

Student: That the gods were great heroes among human beings.

Strauss: Deified human beings. It is known by the name of . . . but I think that it is much older than him. I think he never mentions him. But the reason may be that he was more learned than those who called this . . . , and therefore give it a somewhat narrow view. This is true.

Now let us turn to paragraph 708. In the middle of that paragraph he says that "heroism of virtue. . ."

Student: "For that heroism of virtue which realizes its highest idea belongs to philosophy"

Strauss: He means his best idea here. His best idea. You remember his distinction between highest and best. Yes?

Student: "its best idea belongs to philosophy and not to poetry."

Strauss: Yes. That is all we need. He is not a romantic in the sense loosely defined before. But you also must not forget another implication because the teachers of men up to Vico's time, to put it mildly, were not only the philosophers, but also the Bible. And when he says unqualifiedly here "that heroism of virtue" which is modeled on the best idea is that of the philosophers, then he should at least have said something about how this is related to the Bible which he does not do. And in the sequel he makes clear another kind of heroism, the gallant heroism. This gallant heroism belongs to the age of corruption.

Now what is this gallant heroism? It is surely Homer, but it is also - as I think the word "gallant" points to - the medieval heroism to which he does not refer here. You know, the medieval knights. Yes?

Student: You're bringing up the Middle Ages . . . Could we say that there is a parallel between Homer and Dante?

Strauss: He takes up Dante.

Student: Yes. I read that part. Would he consider Dante as he does Homer and see him mainly as an expression of a period? But undoubtably Dante existed.

Strauss: Let us wait until we come to the passage, but I would say offhand that Dante cannot be called simply a poet in Vico's sense because he was also a philosopher as everyone knows and Vico knows.

Student: inaudible

Strauss: Even apart from the familiar, the other writings. The Monarchia is not a poetic book unless you use "poetic" in a very wide sense of the word in which it is not commonly used.

Now, paragraph 709.

Student: "All that we have remarked in these three corollaries on heroic sentences, descriptions and customs, belongs properly to the discovery of the true Homer which we shall take up in the following book."

Strauss: That is one of the many references where he is so super-clear and at the same time indicates a strange lack of order. It is absolutely unnecessary to do this kind of thing.

Now, paragraph 715.

Student: "With the practice of burial the idea of the underworld was extended, and the poets called the grave the underworld (an expression also found in Holy Scripture)."

Strauss: Here is one of the few references. But it is not, of course, a specific quote, but only a general reference to Biblical usage. Now it is true that there is an Old Testament term for this Hades - \_\_\_\_\_ in Hebrew - which in the \_\_\_\_\_ is translated as Inferno, so here is a fact which is, in a way, correct. But of course, what is the context here? Poetic cosmography. Heaven and Inferno. This naturally causes us to consider the question of the Biblical cosmography, a question which is not explicitly discussed by Vico. On thing I would like to know. When you look at this section on the cosmography, you see this discussion of Hell in paragraph 714 to 721; of heaven, 711 to 713; and of earth, 722. I.e. hell is discussed at infinitely greater length than heaven and earth together. That has to do with questions of fear of which he had spoken before.

Paragraph 727. Read that, please.

Student: "But as the indefinite force of human minds went on developing, and as the contemplation of the heavens required for taking the auspices obliged the peoples to study the heavens continually, in the minds of the nations the heavens rose ever higher, and with them rose likewise the gods and the heroes."

Strauss: This is one of the many cases where he speaks of nations, \_\_\_\_\_, and not of gentes. Gentes could mean, of course, only the gentiles. \_\_\_\_\_ does not have such an indication and therefore the question is clear. In other words, is not the same development from heaven understood as slightly higher than the highest mountain to the so-called true distances not also noted in the Bible? Go on.

Student: "And here for the ascertainment of poetic astronomy it may help us to make use of three items of philological erudition. The first states that astronomy was brought into the world by the Chaldean people; the second, that the Phoenicians carried from the Chaldeans to the Egyptians the use of the quadrant and the knowledge of the elevation of the pole; and the third, that the Phoenicians, who must have been instructed by the Chaldeans, brought astral theology to the Greeks."

Strauss: You see, no Jews mentioned. This development of science bypassed the Jews. Of course, Vico can always say that Moses knew all these things by divine revelation. Go on.

Student: "To these three bits of philological erudition we may add these two philosophical truths: first, the civil truth that nations if not emancipated in the extreme of religious liberty (which only comes in the final stages of decadence), are naturally wary of accepting foreign deities; and second, the physical truth that, by an ocular illusion, the planets seem to us larger than the fixed stars."

Strauss: In other words, an ultimate liberty of religion is possible after all if only in a case of extreme decadence.

Now let us turn to paragraph 729.

Student: "Thus, beginning with vulgar astronomy, the first peoples wrote in the skies \_\_\_\_\_ the history of their gods and their heroes."

Thence there remained this eternal property, that the memories of men full of divinity or of heroism are matter worthy of history, in the one case because of works of genius and of esoteric wisdom, in the other because of works of valor and of vulgar wisdom."

Strauss: This is all that we need. Here the superiority of theoretical to practical life is still maintained corresponding to the superiority of secret to vulgar wisdom. Works of the mind and esoteric wisdom are distinguished from works of virtue and vulgar wisdom. Just as secret wisdom is connected with the intelligence, the vulgar wisdom is connected with virtue.

Paragraph 736. We cannot read this long paragraph, but you see he refers here again to the impious race of Shem and also to the descendents of Ham and Japheth. Here the is question which we have come across before. How does Vico's chronology jive with the orthodox chronology? That is a very long question. I can only report that Nicolini who is very conservative, in effect, says that it does not jive. But it would take long work of computation which I, for one, have not been able to do. I remind you only of the question.

Paragraph 737 is extremely interesting for several reasons. Only the second half is necessary for our purposes.

Student: "For, as we shall show later, monarchy cannot arise save as a result of the unchecked liberty of the peoples, to which the optimates subject their power in the course of civil wars. When this authority is thus divided into minimal parts among the peoples"

Strauss: In other words, where every citizen is only one hundred thousandth or one millionth of the power of the commonwealth. That is what he means. A democracy. Yes?

Student: "the whole of it is easily taken over by those who, coming forward as partisans of popular liberty, emerge finally as monarchs.

Strauss: So now we know the dirty secrets of monarchy.

Student: "Phoenicia, however, as a maritime nation enriched by its commerce, remained in the stage of popular liberty, which is the first form of human government."

Strauss: Yes. That we know. A commercial nation can remain democratic. Facts which prove that true to everybody in Vico's age?

Student: Holland?

Strauss: Holland, of course. And also the memory of Carthage and so on. But Holland was the famous case. Very interesting. So, in other words, it is possible that a democracy may last. It does not have to be transformed into a monarchy if it is a commercial nation.

Here we see also how complicated is his earlier reference to Spinoza's political doctrine, that of doctrine. Spinoza's doctrine was based on the experience of Holland which expressed these trading nations. So that is quite remarkable.

Paragraph 739, towards the end.

Student: "This science preserved the first names that had been given to it in full propriety: astronomy, the science of the law of the stars, and astrology, the science of the speech of the stars."

Strauss: Which are literal translations of the Greek words. Whether they are the origins of the terms is of no interest to us. Yes?

Student: "Both names signified divination, even as from the afore-said theorems came the term theology for the science of the language of the gods in their oracles, auspices and auguries."

Strauss: You see, theology like astrology - speaking. Astrology, the speaking of the stars, what the stars tell men. Theology, the science not of the gods, but of what the gods tell, what they say in their oracles.

Regarding this whole section, at the end of which we have more or less arrived, one would really have to consider paragraph 688. And one can state this overall thesis as follows: The whole is originally the family or, in a later stage, the city which always means, of course, this city to which the individual people belong. What Plato calls the . This Platonic thought is here implied. And the ascent from this primary whole to the true whole comes only with the emergence of philosophy.

So this was our leftover from the last meeting. We turn now to the eleventh section, Poetic Geography. Paragraph 741. Read that very slowly and, Mr. \_\_\_\_\_, watch the text.

Student: "It remains for us now to cleanse the other eye of poetic history, namely poetic geography. By that property of human"

Second Student: It should be translated "poetic geography which by that property."

Strauss: Well. This is not important for our point. You can omit that until he comes to the axioms.

Student: "in describing unknown or distant things, in respect of which they either have not had the true idea themselves or wish to explain it to others who do not have it, men make use of the semblances of things known or near at hand."

Strauss: \_\_\_\_\_. If the first is translated by "unknown" then the second should be translated by "unknown." But, of course, there may be a printing error. I do not know. He translates it differently because he looks up paragraph 122 which is the axiom and in which what he says seems to be much more sensible, that we explain unknown and foreign things by their similarity to known and near things. But, for all we know, Vico might have changed the thought and made it more subtle because we can say, "How truly do people really know these near things?" This is one of those cases in which one would have to go back, I am afraid, even to the manuscript which would not be difficult because the manuscript has been



somewhere preserved. I think in Naples. And one could get money from a foundation and have a photo made.

What he develops here, then, is this. Poetic geography is of Greek origin. The alternative which he discusses is this: The names of towns, mountains, etc. in new lands are given by the immigrants in accordance with their domestic customs. Well, New York and New Amsterdam and many, many others. I.e. they are given Greek and Phoenician names and so on.

Now paragraph 742. Yes?

Student: One question. Is there any significance to the fact that something that he isn't quoting he puts in quotation marks and says, "As it is in the *Axioms*?"

Strauss: Well, if Vico does such funny things, it is possible that he quotes even himself, not literally. But we do not know whether it is not a printing error. In another case, I found an error and in Nicolini's commentary it was stated that this was a printing error. There was one case where the text reads "philosophic" and it was "philologic," and he corrects that. It is not a perfect text which we have.

Student: Yes, but at one point it is very obvious because in paragraph 122 \_\_\_\_\_ is translated as "known" . . .

Strauss: In paragraph 122 I think that the only difference is that in the second case

Student: inaudible

Strauss: In the second case. And, of course, it is not quite literal. He says "\_\_\_\_\_ " and here he says "\_\_\_\_\_. That is, of course, not proper procedure if you quote because you should literally quote. And this rule was as well-known in 1740 as it is now.

Student: inaudible

Strauss: Yes. This might be the proper reading. It might also be one of these corrections of the text which editors sometimes make.

Student: inaudible

Strauss: That is also Nicolini.

Student: I think that this is more reliable - the one that Mr. \_\_\_\_\_ made.

Strauss: Oh, I see. At any rate, if there is someone really interested in Vico he will have to look at the manuscripts.

Student: But what is the consequence?

Strauss: It's not very important. I took it only as a little specimen of Vico's procedure. We will come across a passage later on in which I believe he almost says in so many words that changes in procedure are something which may be valid. But let us go on. Let us read the next paragraph.

Student: "Within Greece itself, accordingly, lay the original East called Asia or India, the West called Europe or Hesperia, the North called Thrace or Scythia, and the South called Libya or Mauretania."

Strauss: In other words, it is clear that these are the original names of these certain places. (illustration on blackboard) If this is Greece and this is Asia, when they begin to explore and discover the coast, what we now call Asia Minor, they call it West Asia. And when they go still further east and see that there is still something further they call that Asia and that is called only Asia Minor, etc.

Now the principle is the same as that observed by a Biblical critic who he knew as you can see from the index - Isaac de la Peyrere. He wrote in Latin in 1655. He is the one who discovered the pre-Adamites. They are mentioned. Men prior to Adam. He had this theory. That Adam was ancestor only to the Jews, or part of the human race, but that there were other men prior to Adam. The Jews are only one special nation, and not the oldest nation. He makes very much of the fact that the same Hebrew word means both the land, i.e. Palestine in the case of the Jews, and the earth. So that the "God of the whole earth" means also the God of the whole land, i.e. of Palestine. This parochialism of early nations is the same thought as he has here. He knew that. There will be another quotation from Peyrere which we will hold for later.

Now in paragraph 743 he says that civilization goes from west to east, whereas in 736 he says just the opposite. This contradiction was pointed out to me by Nicolini.

So let us turn to paragraph 752.

Student: "In like manner the Eridanus, into which Phaethon fell . . which the Greeks attached to the stars, among which is Eridanus."

Strauss: What does he mean by that? I just wonder if he does not mean that the Bible in contradistinction to the Greek myth also embodies Egyptian and other matter. I do not know. Paragraph 756.

Student: "The Laestrygonians in Homer's time must have been a people of Greece, and when he says that they have the longest days he must mean the longest in Greece and not in the whole world."

Strauss: Does this "longest day" remind you of something?

Student: Joshua?

Strauss: Exactly. In the Book of Joshua, Chapter 10, verses 13-14. I will read you the literal translation: "The sun stood still in the midst of heaven and hasted not to go down about a whole day. And there was no day like that before it or after it." To this la Peyrere gives the following commentary which I can give you only in my rough paraphrase because I didn't have access to la Peyrere's book. The day of the battle of Gibeon was the longest that ever was in Gibeon, but not on the whole earth. For example, not in the polar regions where there are days whole months long. This piece of physical knowledge which la Peyrere possessed in 1655 was surely also possessed by Vico in 1740. This is mentioned in the second and center item of these three numbered things.

Now. Paragraph 758.

Student: "On these same principles of poetic Greek geography it is possible to solve many great difficulties in the ancient history of the East"

Strauss: Of the Orient.

Student: "Arising from the fact that many people who must have been situated in the East itself have been taken for very distant peoples, particularly toward the north and south."

Strauss: In other words, we must apply these findings of Vico to the ancient's history of the Orient as well.

Paragraph 761.

Student: "Now, since we have returned from the Latins to the Greeks. . . (who said that their Jove Ammon was the most ancient Jove in the world"

Strauss: The most ancient of all the others in the world. He is very emphatic.

Student: "and that all the Herculeases of the other nations had taken their name from the Egyptian Hercules - an accord with two axioms set forth above - erroneously believing themselves to be the oldest nations in the world)"

Strauss: The oldest of all other nations in the world. Also emphatic. Their gods are the oldest of all gods and they have the oldest nation. I think one can say that he discusses here what for him is the error underlying the notion of the chosen people and how that error arose. Each nation claims to be the oldest and that it's god is the oldest.

There are also things which are very strange in 770 following. Read only the end of paragraph 772.

Student: "Thus, by two different manifestations of the conceit of the nations - that of the Greeks in making such a stir about the Trojan war, and that of the Romans in boasting an illustrious foreign origin - the Greeks foisted their Aeneas upon the Romans and the latter finally accepted him as their founder."

Strauss: God knows what this implies, a twofold story. It is possible to give a very limited interpretation of that. Whether this is an examination of the exodus from Egypt and Moses' legislation originating in Jewish Alexandria - but there may be other things. That is very complicated.

Let us turn to paragraph 776.

Student: "All ancient geography is strewn with such altars. To begin with Asia, Keller in his Notitia orbis antiqui states that all the cities of Syria had the word Aram placed before or after their specific designations, whence Syria itself was called Aramea or Aramia."

Strauss: Paragraph 778 in the middle where he speaks of the Syrian of language.

Student: "But in the Syrian language the word ari means lion."

Strauss: The same is true of Hebrew as you surely knew. Here, then, he says a little bit later about the word . . .

Student: "This word ara, uniform in sound and meaning in so many nations"

Strauss: "Nations" not gentes. Naciones. Here he uses a term which surely is Hebrew and this implies, if you view the whole context, since this is such a basic word - ara or ari or whatever - according to Vico and the very wide construction that he makes, that we are not concerned with soundness or unsoundness first, but with what he means. The common origin of all nations.

Paragraph 779, the conclusion of this part, is interesting because of another reference to what common sense means. Read only the second part of that paragraph.

Student: "For in these, as in embryos or matrices, we have discovered . . . that the theological poets were the sense and the philosophers the intellect of human wisdom."

Strauss: Again, with a view to common sense of which he spoke before, sense has to be taken very literally. The common senses in contradistinction to the common intellect. All recondite wisdom has its origin in these things which Vico found in the beginnings of the gentiles. Where is the place for revelation? A defense of Vico's orthodoxy could take this form. When he speaks of all the recondite, concealed wisdom, must this be understood in contradistinction to the revealed wisdom? One could say that, but the strange thing is that he does not bring it up.

Paragraph 780. Now we come to the third center book.

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Your conclusion is absolutely true and sensible. Both no rational, wise lawgivers nor any rational individuals establishing rationally by contract a commonwealth. This is perfectly true. And you made a number of other remarks which were quite good. I believe that you surely don't mean to say that Vico has in mind the bourgeoisie. Surely the patricians are not bourgeoisie. But there is a certain analogy. His sympathies were certainly on the side of the bourgeoisie if you use this later language.

There are a few points which I would like to discuss briefly. You clarified quite a few points of importance. I will mention, naturally, those on which I did not quite agree with you. What did you mean here: "The benignity of reason, open and magnimous, in popular commonwealths, is in no sense better or more natural than the rigor of civil equity in aristocracy or the exclusiveness of the theocratic ages. Each stage has its own nature and, therefore, is as good as any other." Each is as natural as the other, but not each is as good as the other. Just as, say, babyhood is as natural as adulthood. That doesn't mean that babyhood is as good as adulthood.

Student: inaudible

Strauss: But, still, does it not come out clearly that reason and nationality come into their own only in the stage of the human society as distinguished from divine or heroic?

Student: inaudible

Strauss: He surely didn't regard it as omnipotent, if you mean that. But, still, I think that the right human society is the human society according to Vico.

Here, what did you mean by this expression on the same page: "The formula which won the divine sanction was: To sustain one's power one has to sustain the other fellow's imagination." On the second reading I understand it. But, still, explain it. Perhaps there were some others who had difficulty following it.

Student: inaudible

Strauss: This is not as I understood it at the second reading. In other words, that deception or self-deception of other fellows is the basis of the power of the ruler. That is what I understood the second time.

Student: I meant fraud.

Strauss: Well, whether you say fraud or deception, it is the same thing. Mr. \_\_\_\_\_?

Student: inaudible

Strauss: What do you mean by that?

Student: In \_\_\_\_, latter part. I think the reasoning is very clear. He says, "The heroic age is the age of the state par excellence. It is the civil equity which is reason of state . . .

Strauss: We have to take up this passage, especially since this question of the \_\_\_\_\_ or natural equity has been bothering us throughout the whole course.

Now there is another point. "Homer is, therefore, exactly what Vico set out to establish. Civil histories of ancient Greek customs, not of gods, but of heroes. And, as such, Homer is incomparable. This implies, of course, as I think that you imply throughout, that Homer is not an early poet. I mean that this symbol, Homer, doesn't stand for an early poet because precisely by mirroring the changes from one stage to another, he is such an important source. He contains the history especially if you assume that the Odyssey was written four or five hundred years after the Iliad.

What did you mean by the sentence: "Vico's ideal eternal history is not compatible with the scholastic succession of nations inasmuch as it vitiates the uniform laws which regard the course of each nation as an autonomous development.

Student: I assumed that his basic premise is that each nation will have some peculiar differences and the external circumstances might differ, but if certain nations are under certain circumstances the consequences will follow in a uniform way and the common denominator there is the common nature of nations.

Strauss: I understood it somewhat differently, and the wording, I think, would permit my interpretation at least as much as it would yours. Vico's eternal history is not compatible with the scholastic succession of nations, i.e. with the fact that knowledge, wisdom, scholarship, migrated from one nation - say the Chaldeans to the Greeks or Phoenicians and so on - and therefore it is not an autonomous development. And I think that that is true. The autonomous development is a kind of ideal type which has to be then modified in terms of the empirical facts.

Then there are two other points here. When you quoted Collingwood, "Vico perceived in the primitive's time far beyond the range of the usual superficial ideas in a flash as in a vision of presentiment and energy. A body of power which is now hidden and attenuated." We must never forget that, of course, there is something true in that. But that Vico's primary assertion that the early men were polytheists is Plato's assertion in the Laws, Book III and Vico knew this.

Here you quoted a poet of the present dark time, I presume: "The Golden Age when this was not quoted, open, empty allegory, but a living power." And then you quote: "All things were still full of God." Can you tell me who wrote that?

Student: inaudible

Strauss: I see. Good. This was a very fine paper. Thank you.

We still have a backlog from last time. I think that we were in paragraph 810 or thereabouts. Here we come to the "Philosophic Proofs for the Discovery of the True Homer" which also consists of

numbered items and this time there are twenty eight. Let us read paragraph 816 which is the one in which Jesus is mentioned for the second time.

Student: "The poetic characters, in which the essence of the fables consists, were born of the need of a nature incapable of abstracting forms and properties from subjects. Consequently they must have been the manner of thinking of entire peoples, who had been placed under this natural necessity in the times of their greatest barbarism."

Strauss: That we know already. We discussed it last time. No concepts, but only images. Images, however, of universal meaning. So that Achilles means not only this individual Achilles, but the hero. And Draco doesn't mean this particular Athenian legislator, but the savage legislator of early times.

Student: "On this there is a fine passage in Aristotle's Ethics . . . of Jesus Christ and of the Virgin Mary are exceedingly large."

Strauss: Now, what does he mean by that? The poetic way of thinking is that of whole peoples in the state of barbarism, i.e. it is not a privilege of geniuses. And in this stage men present universals in the form of particulars. They mean hero, but they say Achilles. But what do they do with the particulars? They do not leave them untouched. I mean, they have seen an outstanding fighter like Achilles, but they do not keep Achilles like he was and universalize him. They modify him in their imaginations. And what do they do? They enlarge him. They deify him. Someone mentioned last time. That is the activity. They enlarge human beings. They make them gods.

In other words, these gods present men. Vico has to retranslate the gods and heroes into human beings in order to understand them. In this connection, the first mention of Christ as we have seen. He gives here only an external point, namely the more than life-size greatness of the paintings.

The next paragraph also seems to be of special importance.

Student: "Since barbarians lack reflection, which, when ill used, is the mother of falsehood, the first heroic Latin poets sang true histories, that is, the Roman wars."

Strauss: In other words, there cannot be fraud proper because - and that is not a very flattering reason - they are too dumb. But, of course, there can be objective falsehood if one may say so, namely, as to why they err by virtue of their short minds. Yes?

Student: "And in the returned barbarian times, in virtue of this nature of barbarism, the Latin poets like Gunther, William of Apulia and others again sang nothing but history, and the romancers of the same period thought they were writing"

Strauss: They believed they were writing true histories, i.e. they believed that they were stating the facts as they happened, but they only believed it. Yes?

Student: "Even Boiardo and Ariosto, who came in an age illuminated by philosophy, took the subjects of their poems from the history of Bishop Turpin of Paris."

Strauss: In other words, even though they were enlightened, their matter stemmed from an unenlightened age. But how far Boiardo and Ariosto modified that matter coming from medieval times, he does not say here. He will speak of Dante in the sequel.

Student: "And in virtue of this same nature of barbarism, which for lack of reflection does not know how to feign (whence it is naturally truthful, open, faithful, generous and magnanimous), even Dante, though learned in the loftiest esoteric knowledge, filled the scenes of his Comedy with real persons and portrayed real events in the lives of the dead. For that reason he gave the name Comedy to his poem, for the Old Comedy of the Greeks, as we have said above, portrayed real persons in its plays."

Strauss: I.e. contemporaries. Contemporaries who were new, not, say, Socrates. Socrates is not a poetic character. This individual whom everyone knows.

Student: "In this respect Dante was like Homer of the Iliad . . . since they deal with private life which is not public knowledge, it believes them true."

Strauss: Now that is a very complicated paragraph as you must have seen. Histories of barbarian times are, of course, not simply true, but only true in the view of the barbarians in question because they cannot yet reflect. But what is the situation of the poets common in the enlightened times when they take up these early, popular stories? Do they believe in their truth as the old romancers did? Although he does not say, the inference is clear. They do not and therefore the situation of Ariosto is different from that of the medieval writers. But the same would seem to apply to Dante because he was learned in the highest, recondite science, esoteric science.

How does he explain the title of Dante's chief work? He says that Dante presented dead human beings. Dead of course because they were in the Inferno. But true because they were true persons and not poetic characters. That is the reason why Dante called it the Comedy. That is very complicated information. Yes?

Student: inaudible

Strauss: As a contemporary, as our friend, Vico, knew, of course. I mean, he knew Dante. But he might have used an abbreviation. That is, in many cases, I mean disregarding the exceptions, that is a loose way of doing it, but not completely irrational. Just as it is, of course, not literally true that there were never non-mythical figures in Greek tragedies. We know through Aristotle that , a post-Euripidean tragic poet, produced such purely fictitious characters. Yes?

Student: inaudible

Strauss: Yes. Well, that is a very complicated sentence. He says that the nature of barbarism through its lack of reflection



prevents conscious fiction. Yet Dante, who did not belong to the age of barbarism, i.e. who would have been capable of conscious fiction, did not do it. Now I see his logic. Not because he could not have made it, but because he did what the new comedy did, i.e. he takes real persons. This isn't the whole thing, but this is one step. How do we go from here to explain it fully what he means about Dante? In other words, Dante corresponds to the old comedy which takes individuals known by name. So he takes his Florentines and other Italians and so on. Dante corresponds, so to speak, to Aristophanes, not to the new comedy. That seems to be the case. Yes?

Student: inaudible

Strauss: Well, the theme of comedy and the new comedy will be taken up later on. Mr. \_\_\_\_\_?

Student: inaudible

Strauss: Well, it is not quite pertinent, but still it is a kind of training in our understanding of Vico by applying Vician concepts to a phenomenon which Vico accepts. Now what was your point?

Student: The Confessions must be more than just the characters. It must be also verse.

Strauss: The verse, but the Confessions are not . . .

Student: No. That is the reason that you can call the play a comedy. Because it is in verse and it uses real people.

Strauss: But, still, the question which is more important than verse or non-verse is whether the writer idealizes his subject or not, and I am sure that Rousseau idealized

(inaudible) And Goethe called his autobiography \_\_\_\_\_, Fiction and Truth which means not merely that he gives the history of this fiction, which he surely does, but that the whole presentation is also a piece of fiction. And I think that Rousseau surely did that too.

Well, let us go on. Read the next paragraph.

Student: "Since poetic characters are of this nature, their poetic allegories, as we have shown above throughout the Poetic Wisdom, must necessarily contain historical significations referring only to the earliest times of Greece."

Strauss: A question which occurred to me in reading these two paragraphs was, again, Dante. Dante, who was treated already in the preceding paragraph. Dante presented true persons and true facts, but, on the other hand, where does the element of fiction - of deception - come in in Dante? That would be the question, I think. Because, in the whole context of paragraph 81? - no fiction in the barbaric age. No possibility of fiction. But possibility of fiction in the enlightened age. Dante belongs to a more enlightened age. The possibility of fiction exists. Start from Aristophanes. Aristophanes took live characters, but the stories he tells about them are surely not taken from the police records of Athens. We will perhaps get a little clearer as we go on.

Now, let us read the next paragraph. We don't have to read the whole thing. Let us read only roughly the middle. One moment. Mr. \_\_\_\_\_?

Student: One question about paragraph 817. When he says in this respect Dante is like the Homer of the Iliad rather than of the Odyssey in what respect does he mean?

Strauss: Of course, he says "in this respect." He doesn't mean simply. In what respect? He put true persons in the fable. I do not know the statement of Longinus which he has in mind. And probably what Longinus says is very different from what Vico says anyway. So there is no irreparable harm. But we must see what he means in the context. Now what can he mean when he says that Dante has greater similarities to the Iliad than to the Odyssey. What does that mean?

Student: I think that he meant the dramatic or representative rather than the narrative. I wonder if that has any connection with what he said above about Dante. Although he lived in an age of reflection he chose not to think. I wonder if there is any connection between that description of Dante and the Homer of the Iliad.

Strauss: I do not see it, but you may be right. It is a very hard passage. I do not know whether he means that there was a traditional comparison - a very crude one - the Iliad and tragedy, and the Odyssey and comedy. Perhaps he wishes to reinforce here also the strangeness of the title. Because the Divine Comedy reminds much more of a comedy than of a tragedy at least surely in the first two parts. I do not know. Mr. \_\_\_\_\_?

Student: Doesn't he believe in the factuality of the Trojan Wars. inaudible

Strauss: Yes. He mentions that. But is the application the same towards Dante? If there were a parallel between Homer and Dante it would simply mean that Dante did not believe the Christian equivalent of the suffering of Homer. I do not know whether he means that. Yes?

Student: Doesn't he say that the reason that Dante's Divine Comedy is parallel to Homer's Iliad because that is what \_\_\_\_\_ said was a dramatic work, whereas the Odyssey is a narrative work. So he is saying that the Divine Comedy is not a narrative work.

Strauss: But still, what would this mean? I mean, true histories are narrative and not dramatic.

Student: It is just that if you want to know which of Homer's works Dante's Divine Comedy is more like - one has a certain character of drama attached to it . . .

Strauss: Perhaps we will come back to this subject when we have finished the discussion of Homer. Will you remind me of that?

Student: Just one point. Is there an Odyssey for Dante? inaudible

Strauss: It could be. Because he speaks more of himself. In the Divine Comedy he speaks of himself only at the beginning. I do not know. But I suggest that we come back when we see what he has to say about the Iliad and the Odyssey later. Mr. \_\_\_\_\_?

Student: inaudible

Strauss: I do not understand your question. He says that according to Longinus the Iliad is altogether dramatic and the Odyssey is altogether narrative

Student: inaudible

Strauss: Well, the theme of the Iliad is earlier than the theme of the Odyssey. That is clear. But how this is compatible with the distinction between drama and narrative, this is our question. Because if the early statements are true - literally true - in the opinion of the theological poet there should be narrative rather than drama. I do not know, but this is my interpretation. Mr. \_\_\_\_\_?

Student: A 19th century thinker who clarifies this - in his rather interesting The Hero: A Study of Myth as Ritual in which he pushes this notion that dramatic representation comes first. Before there is anything like an orderly telling, there is an acting out.

Strauss: A repetition as it were. So that ritual . . .

Student: Ritual drama is the earliest form. (inaudible) was necessary to solve the difficulty.

Strauss: Perhaps. But he could have stated this particular point without - and, to some extent, come to think of it he did state it. Do you remember? When he speaks of hieroglyphs? What does he mean? You do not speak about it. You give factual representation of what you mean. And this could, of course, be as well actions as things. This is true. One could connect that. But, still, it is rather thin and I suggest that we first go on. Paragraph 819 in the middle.

Student: "In that human indigence, the peoples, who were almost all body and almost no reflection, must have been all vivid sensation in perceiving particulars, strong imagination in apprehending and magnifying them, sharp wit in referring them to their imaginative genera and robust memory in retaining them. It is true that these faculties appertain to the mind, but they have their roots in the body and draw their strength from it."

Strauss: That is what I mean. If these faculties of the mind which are so crucial have a bodily basis then we cannot leave it as the mere science of the minds as Vico suggested, and we come back to the proposition which I made more than once that the new science must be based on physics and the science of the body.

Paragraph 821.

Student: "By the very nature of poetry it is impossible for anyone to be at the same time a sublime poet and a sublime metaphysi-

cian, for metaphysics abstracts the mind from the senses, and the poetic faculty must submerge the whole mind in the senses; metaphysics soars up to universals, and the poetic faculty must plunge deep into particulars."

Strauss: Superficially that means a contradiction with what he said on Dante in paragraph 818, but if we put the proper emphasis on "equal" - it is impossible for anyone to be at the same time an equally sublime poet and an equally sublime metaphysician. The general thought is, of course, familiar to us. The age of overpowering imagination and passion is distinguished from the age of the preponderance of reason. This has been said many times.

Let us also read paragraphs 824 and 825.

Student: "For we have seen that Aristotle regarded the Homeric lies as without equal, which is equivalent to Horace's opinion that his characters are inimitable."

Strauss: You see, inimitable lies is the same as inimitable characters. The poetic characters are lies. This doesn't mean fraud. But they are untrue. We have seen this before. Yes?

Student: "He is celestially sublime in his poetic sentences . . . and reflections on the passions themselves are the work of false and frigid poets."

Strauss: Now, again, we must take this together with the preceding statement. The marvelous lies are at the same time true, namely true to the passions, not true cognitively. They are perfect examples of the passions. And this is, I think, the solution of the many seeming contradictions we had when he spoke of the truth of these early utterances. They are true in the sense of a true expression of the passions. Not more.

In paragraph 829 he draws a conclusion which is very important.

Student: "For in their customs the Homeric heroes are like boys in the frivolity of their minds, like women in the vigor of their imaginations and like turbulent youths in the boiling fervor of their wrath, as was also shown above, and therefore it is impossible that a philosopher should have conceived them so naturally and felicitously."

Strauss: Homer cannot have been a philosopher. No poet of the first order can be a philosopher because of this identification with the passions which is incompatible with the philosophic nature.

In paragraph 838 we come to the end of this part.

Student: "But, as recondite wisdom appertains . . . and the latter that his characters are inimitable, which comes to the same thing."

Strauss: In the original it comes out more clearly because at the end of each of these half sentences the key word appears. Aristotle speaks of Homer's lies. Horace speaks of Homer's characters. The lies are the characters. But what are the characters in plain English - which Homer coined or early poetry created? The gods.

The gods are the lies and poetic characters.

Now we come to the philological proofs. And here is where you began today. Yes?

Student: Just one question. Does this mean that the philosopher cannot recognize . . .?

Strauss: Oh, he can recognize them, but he cannot identify himself with them. He cannot give an equally powerful expression to them, and the poet can. You see, it is very hard when you read Plato to say what he could or could not have done. To what extent does Plato present in a moving manner non-philosophic sentiments? If you take, for example, Alcibiades - this vitality incarnate, I will call it - at the end of the \_\_\_\_\_. It is very powerfully presented. But can he move one? Whether Plato could not have presented a scene between Alcibiades and, say, the King of Persia in the style of a Shakespearean play - I suppose he could, but he never tried. And if Vico goes perhaps too far in saying that a philosopher cannot do it, yet a philosopher wouldn't do it.

Student: But this has nothing to do with the description of the passions.

Strauss: No, that is something entirely different. That can be done extremely dispassionately with rhetoric and in a very exact way. But it is surely not meant to incite passion or to make us sympathize with the passion. It is only meant to tell us what we need to know about the passions to arouse them on certain occasions in particular assemblies which is not what poetry does. Yes?

Student: inaudible

Strauss: Because Alcibiades is drunk and this is not the form in which a true heroic figure appears in his full heroicity. Second the story he tells about the rebuff he received from Socrates for his indecent advances is extremely ridiculous. That is not something which can induce one to admire Alcibiades. The only thing for which you can admire Alcibiades is that despite his big preoccupations with his affairs he still retained his sense of Socrates' extraordinary being. But this we have discovered already just by reading. We don't need Alcibiades for that.

Take another scene. What is more touching than a loving spouse on the day of the death of her beloved husband? But when you see \_\_\_\_\_ in the Phaedo it's only ridiculous. Somebody says, in effect to \_\_\_\_\_, "Throw her out!" That is not a moving figure at all. Yes?

Student: inaudible

Strauss: Yes. In a way. But read in the context of the whole \_\_\_\_\_, of course, it is anti \_\_\_\_\_. We must not forget that. After having heard those terrific speeches about heroes and especially Socrates' own speech then this supposedly authentic commentary - and the deeper indication is very clear. People often think that Alcibiades is meant to be eros incarnate. That is wrong. If it is any character there it is the wholly inconspicuous Aristodemus who accompanies Socrates. When he is describes. (inaudible)

That is one of Plato's tests - not deceptions, tests. Whether one falls for that or not. Alcibiades was certainly an outstanding leader. There is no question about that. He was extremely gifted. But Plato says, "What did he do with his gifts?"

I do not at the moment remember everything in Plato, of course, but I wonder if there is there any theme which moves one deeply, which is not related to Socrates himself. The question is not whether Plato could have written a tragedy of the Euripidean type. I regard it as perfectly possible. But surely he did not do it. He gave us, to a certain extent, the reasons why he did not do it when he speaks about drama. To that extent these statements are quite serious, although they are deliberately overdone.

But Vico, in a way, says that it is physically impossible and I would, by the way, say that the example given by him of Dante - and one could perhaps think of some other examples - would prove that he is wrong. That the highest poetry and the highest thought can go together. They are probably very rare, but not impossible. I cannot imagine very well Aristotle writing a comedy or a tragedy, but in the case of Plato I can.

Student: inaudible

Strauss: I do not know him. This is not the same league as Aristotle. Yes?

Student: Vico himself wrote verses. How would this go with his recondite knowledge?

Strauss: I have not read his poetry, but . . .

Student: It is not bad.

Strauss: But it is still rather academic stuff.

I think that the common sense of mankind would agree with Vico at this point. Generally it is true. Yes?

Student: Are you going to discuss at some point why these philosophical proofs are philosophical proofs?

Strauss: That is a very important question and I am very sorry that I have not been able to give it any thought. But it should be considered surely. In other words, you had the impression which I also had vaguely when I read it that in some points it could have appeared among the philological proofs and visa versa. That is quite true, but it requires a special intensive study.

Student: I tried to study it in light of that statement that philosophy is certainty and philology is authority. Do you remember that?

Strauss: Certainly I remember.

Second student: inaudible

Strauss: What does this distinction between the true and the certain mean. The true is the rationally evident. The certain is

the factually certain. So, say, I know that Mr. \_\_\_\_\_ is here. To go deeper I would have to know why he is here. But I know in this case why he is here. So that is a bad example. Say, I know what this is for, but I don't know how it works. The \_\_\_\_\_, in Aristotle's case - the why. And that is the fact. But what does Vico do with these facts? By looking at them all over the world he discovers the reason. He transforms what was originally merely certain, i.e. certain facts. He sees its inner reason, its necessity. To that extent, at the end of the New Science, the distinction is abolished. The philological is absorbed into the philosophical. This would, of course, be a general explanation of what you said. But whether he has, in addition, tried to draw our attention to this by some funny business in the distribution of the thing, that I do not know. But that was the vague impression which I also had.

Of course, you can't leave it at that. You had already an earlier discussion where the philosophical is separated from the philological. I forget where. You would have to compare it to that. Or am I factually wrong? Now let me see. I think I found such a distinction somewhere.

Student: The first philosophical proof.

Strauss: I hope that the kind of questions you are raising here are of some use to all of you, but especially to Father \_\_\_\_\_.  
Mr. \_\_\_\_\_?

Student: Didn't you say that the philosophical would proceed from the philological?

Strauss: No. He has his philosophic premise. They precede \_\_\_\_\_. So the thoughts come first. Sense experience comes afterwards.

Student: But he says that he looks around at the certain and then he proceeds from there to the . . .

Strauss: No. This suffers from incompleteness. First he has his thoughts about human nature. This psychological axiom. Then he has a mass of wholly undigested and wholly obscure facts. Then he applies the light of these axioms to these facts which have only one quality in the beginning - that of certainty. Then the certainty is transformed into truth by the application of the axioms. That is the procedure. Mr. \_\_\_\_\_?

Student: In 812 it seems clear that the first philosophical proof is that history is first and then poetry follows. inaudible  
Then he speaks of the other philosophical proof inaudible  
If it is the other one, could it be 814 where he gives the natural course of the fable from the monstrous to the incredible?

Strauss: I do not see why they are manifestly philological.

Student: Philosophical.

Strauss: Philological. Unless we can say number V, for example, paragraph 815. This I would think would be philological rather than philosophical. But it is surely worth going into. And,

strictly speaking, it must be gone into.

Student: There are only two philosophical proofs.

Strauss: Where?

Student: In 812 at the end. "Yet this scholar . . . failed"

Strauss: No he speaks of quasi-philosophical. This philosophic proof which is established by the next point. Whether this has a meaning beyond this - along the lines of what you were saying - I cannot say. I do not know. One would have to go into it. But, at any rate, we cannot do that now without being stuck here and never finishing. We have to turn now to the philological proofs.

Student: Weren't the axioms divided into philosophical and philological?

Strauss: I have a vague recollection. This is not the first time that the distinction occurred.

Student: Paragraph 138.

Strauss: One would really have to go into that and I am very grateful to you that you brought that up.

Now, paragraph 839.

Student: "With this great number of philosophical proofs"

Strauss: Incidentally, one point which occurs to me now - whatever it may be worth. If I am not mistaken of the two references to Jesus Christ, one occurs in the philosophical proofs and one occurs in the philological proofs. Now let us read the next paragraph.

Student: "With this great number of philosophical proofs, resulting in large part from the metaphysical criticism of the founders of the gentile nations"

Strauss: You see, that is already a very complicated matter. These philosophical proofs presuppose a criticism of the authors that is not pure philosophy. Yes?

Student: "among whom we must number Homer since certainly we have no more ancient profane writer than he (as Josephus the Jew stoutly maintains), we may conjoin the following philological proofs."

Strauss: That is interesting. We had an earlier remark in paragraph 788 where he said of Homer merely "the first writer," and quoting Josephus but not adding "the Jew." In other words, I wonder whether here the question of Moses does not come up again and perhaps this could be the difference. That the philologic is that section which is concerned with the problem of the Bible. There is a similar problem which I will only mention for Mr. \_\_\_\_\_'s benefit in Ibn Khaldun - perhaps you have read Mr. \_\_\_\_\_'s book. Ibn Khaldun tries to give an interpretation of Islam on the basis of a kind of Averroistic philosophy. You know, there is also first the philosophy and then the application to the subject. It could be. But I do not know.



Now paragraphs 842 to 843.

Student: "It was the poets who began to write Roman history.

"In the returned barbarian times, the histories were written by the poets who wrote in Latin."

Strauss: Now what does this mean? The Romans in contradistinction to the medieval writers, wrote in their mother tongue. Latin was not the mother tongue of these Latin poets. More simply stated, no schematism as we have seen. The simple schema - that all nations go through the same process - is not sufficient. One must understand the Middle Ages in particular in their peculiarity which has no parallel in the ancient world. Go on.

Student: "Manetho, high priest of the Egyptians, interpreted the ancient history of Egypt, written in hieroglyphics, as a sublime natural theology.

"In the Poetic Wisdom we showed that the Greek philosophers did the same with the early history of Greece recounted in fables."

Strauss: In paragraph 361 to which he here tacitly refers he spoke in the case of Manetho of natural theology and in the case of the Greek philosophers of philosophy. Now he identifies natural theology with philosophy which he did not do there.

Paragraph 848.

Student: "And in the second book we showed that the first writers of both ancient and modern nations were poets."

Strauss: He says now nations and not gentiles. And he says the "modern" nations, too. What can this mean? If the first authors of all nations were poets then the historians of the Jews, too, would have to be poets.

And what about the New Testament? The original work of the modern nations? Modern not in the sense of from 1500 onwards as it means now. It means here the whole post-ancient world. This usage was still quite common in the 17th and 18th century. This I believe is the question.

Now, paragraph 851.

Student: "The rhapsodes went about the cities of Greece singing the books of Homer at the fairs and festivals, one singing one of them, another another.

Strauss: I do not know why I referred to that. . .

Lecture XV

Vico: The New Science, November 20, 1963

Thank you very much for the paper. There will be a great imbalance at the end of this quarter because I will have to give so many good grades. My reputation as a grader will correspondingly decrease. But I can't help that.

It was a very clear and sensible paper. I would like to comment only on a few points. One thing (inaudible), especially since you are a Canadian. You, too, use \_\_\_\_\_ as if it were singular. \_\_\_\_\_ are. Our ignorant social scientists use it in the singular, but they have an excuse. But you have not. But this is just superficial.

Incidentally, on the issue of monarchy. When I read the first part I had the feeling that you had not seen (inaudible) on monarchy. You provisionally follow this argument that there seems to be no proper monarchy at the peak. But even this view that monarchy is a peak and especially the Roman monarchy. Who was the most famous proponent of this view in Vico's century? You all have heard of him and, I suppose, also read him. The most famous Roman historian of the 18th century.

Student: inaudible

Strauss: Sure. This is, of course, a part - but only a part - of Vico just as it is a part of Machiavelli. We must not forget that.

Student: inaudible

Strauss: A few more points which I wanted to mention. On page 5 top. Vico doesn't speak of any kind of formal legitimacy for his monarch (inaudible) But what is legitimacy? Exactly that natural royal law - you remember the \_\_\_\_\_ which Augustus was said to have acquired this power - and Vico says, "No. This is uninteresting. The interesting royal law is the natural one." Hence, in such a situation when it is necessary that one man rule, whether it was x or y is not the point. But that the monarchy was a necessity. The principle of legitimacy is public utility given sovereignty.

Student: In the sense that there would be no one ruling the state?

Strauss: Yes. And anarchy and so on.

Now on the same page you quote paragraph 986. Will you remind us of that when we come to it? Because there seems to be a difficulty of which I was unaware. It shows us men of the basest condition aspiring today with what we know about human nature, first to nobility in the struggle for connubials, then to honors for the struggle for the councilship. Oh, I see. No. I misunderstood it. The traditional view shows us men of the basest condition. That was not very clearly expressed, but it is alright.

Page 7. Yes. I surely agree with that. A normative teaching of thoughts is implied in the strictly factual teaching. There is no question.

On page 8 you again discuss this question which we have frequently mentioned: the relationship between civil equity and natural equity. But the way in which you stated it is something new to me and maybe I missed something before. First you quote Ulbian's definition, according to which civil equity is the judgement of a very wise man. Natural equity on this level is the equity of which the multitude is aware, i.e. which does not require training and application. Somehow your statement seems to be very incisive and to go beyond what I said before. Will you remind me of this when we come to the paragraph.

Now we have another paper. That of Mr. \_\_\_\_\_. There is only one point which I would like to mention on this paper. He says that we could represent these relations of the various triadic phenomenon schematically like this: natures, customs, natural laws, common-wealths for the sake of the communication of the above things. Languages and characters. For the sake of their justification and sanctioning: jurisprudence, authority, reason and judgement. These are ten. The eleventh triadic unity is the three sects of time, whatever that strange expression may mean. Vico says it in relation to jurisprudence. The three kinds of jurisprudence prevail in three sects of time. The rationale here is that of simultaneity.

In paragraph 975, however, the same situation is made much broader. All the aforesaid institutions have been practiced through three sects of time. What was the conclusion that you drew from that?

Student: inaudible

Strauss: In other words, in a way each is involved in everything? One is involved in everything else.

Student: In the Preface he says that not all are reducible one to the other. The first four articles are (inaudible)

Strauss: I thought that you meant it in a kind of Hegelian way.

Now let me proceed. Since I have to make it a rule for the rest of the quarter that I stop at 5:30 sharp - doctor's orders - I will not now read your statement. I will read it at home and discuss it next time.

Now let us turn to where we left off. Were we about to begin Book IV? You know in the title of the course which nations take, nations is not necessarily gentes. It can be universal, i.e. Jews and Christians.

In paragraph 915 shortly before the center he speaks of constant uniformity proceeding in these various and so diverse customs. So Vico, of course, doesn't deny the immense variety, but he says that in spite of them there are certain uniformities. And as we have seen - as was pointed out in today's paper - even these uniformities are not universally valid. We do not find an equivalent of the Roman empire in Greece, for example. It would be very hard to find a popular democracy in Assyria and so on. Vico knows that.

In paragraph 916 which we might read just to begin somewhere.

Student: "The first nature by an illusion of imagination which is most robust . . . which each of them had in certain gods of its own."

Strauss: You see the emphasis. The gentile nations tried here to make it quite clear and to take this minimum of precaution. Yes?

Student: Furthermore it was a nature all fierce and cruel; but, through that same error of their imagination, men had a terrible fear of the gods whom they themselves had created."

Strauss: (explanation of Italian or Greek phrase)

Student: "From this period there remained two eternal properties: one, that religion is the only means powerful enough to restrain the fierceness of peoples; and the other, that religions prosper when those who preside over them are themselves inwardly reverent."

Strauss: The latter is not a new statement. If you read Chapter 12 in the Leviathan this is the main point. It was, of course, made with anti-clerical intent. If religion loses its image - as they say today - this is due to the conduct of the leaders. But much more important, it is perfectly inconsistent from this statement that he rejects the simplistic, rationalistic view that religion is based on deception. There was no fraud committed, but there were deceived deceivers acting in good faith. They created the gods in their own savage image. They always need religion for restraining the people. Papacy understood in contradistinction to philosophy, of course. But religion loses its power when the heads of religion cease to be sincerely religious. The latter is, of course, true of all religions. And, therefore, there is a kind of retroactive implication on what I said before.

In the next two paragraphs which are brief, it is made clear that reason, conscience and duty are effective only in the human stage, not in the heroic or the divine stages. And there is no reference to the gods here in this connection.

Let us read paragraph 919 to paragraph 921.

Student: "The first customs were all tinged with religion and piety, like those of Deucalion and Pyrrha, fresh from the flood.

"The second were choleric and punctilious, like those related of Achilles.

"The third are dutiful, taught by one's own sense of civil duty."

Strauss: So, you see, only in the first case are religion and piety mentioned. That again raises the question: To what extent is religion needed in the last stage?

Now, paragraphs 923 and 924. The question as to these various subdivisions - the eleven triads - would be very interesting. I have no answer and baseless speculation is of no help. But it would be an interesting question. You see, these stages are very short. Now let us turn to paragraphs 923 to 924.

Strauss: Of course, the first was divine right. But the second . .

Student: "The second was heroic law, the law of force, but controlled by religion, which alone can keep force within bounds where there are no human laws or none strong enough to curb it."

Strauss: You see this great key? If the human laws are strong enough . . . Go on.

Student: Hence providence ordained that the first peoples, ferocious by nature, should be persuaded by this their religion to acquiesce naturally in force, and that, being as yet incapable of reason, they should measure right by fortune, with a view to which they took counsel by auspicial divination. This law of force is the law of Achilles, who referred every right to the tip of his spear."

"The third is the human law dictated by fully developed human reason."

Strauss: So, in other words, the heroic stage is a kind of intermediate stage between the divine and human, and reinforces what was said in the preceding section. So for all we know human laws may be sufficient for restraining force. There is no distinction here made yet between democracy and monarchy. They are simply later.

Paragraph 929 - the languages.

Student: "The first kind of language was a divine mental language by mute religious acts or divine ceremonies, from which there survived in Roman civil law the actus legitimi which accompanied all their civil transactions. This language belongs to religions by the eternal property that it concerns them more to be revered than to be reasoned, and it was necessary in the earliest times when men did not yet possess articulate speech."

Strauss: I was very doubtful as to what Vico had in mind by these mute acts - to what extent he meant this literally. To some extent I believe he did, but he has, of course, also something else in mind. It is speech - \_\_\_\_\_ is the one thing. And the alternative is simply inability to speak, but also silence. Mystery. Religion is the fear of mystery. Mute, in other words, has this dual meaning. At least this dual meaning. Yes? 930.

Student: "The second was by heroic blazonings, with which arms are made to speak; this kind of speech, as we have said above, survived in military discipline."

Strauss: Nowhere else is the implication. Next.

Student: "The third is by articulate speech, which is used by all nations today."

Strauss: By all nations now, not only the gentiles. The question is, "Are there no comparative stages of the Jews and Christians corresponding to the heroic and the divine?"

Student: In paragraph 929 at the bottom, he specifically refers to the gentiles. I noticed the translation doesn't translate it that way.

Strauss: Yes, you are perfectly right, but not in 930.

Student (reader): The 'gentiles' was dropped by the translator.

Strauss: Yes. We will come to that. But one has to consider how. When he says gentes or gentiles - gentiles. There is no question. But when he says nacione and does not explicitly exclude the Jews and Christians, it means nations in general.

Student: inaudible

Strauss: This term - "eternal property" - occurs all the time. The "eternal property" is the property which belongs essentially to the thing. It does not mean that the thing itself exists eternally or is always. So I suggest that we understand "eternal property" in the sense of essential property or necessary property. Essential may be too strong. What was your difficulty.

Student: That explains it. He uses the term several times.

Strauss: All the time. In the background, of course, is this idea of an eternal idea of history. You have the sequence of the divine, heroic and human in all things: religion, arms, laws and so on. And each has its essential property and this is the eternal history, and every part of it is as eternal property of that particular stage under discussion. Yes?

Student: In paragraph 930 where he talks about speaking by arms - does this go back to the paragraph about Achilles?

Strauss: No, this was much before. But what he adds here is that this particular thing remains within the military discipline. This draws our attention to the question, "To what extent must characteristics of an earlier stage survive in later stages?" The most exciting subquestion of that, of course, is the status of religion. Religion originates in the divine age. To what extent must it survive in the latter stages?

Look at paragraph 928, 932, and 937. This is only here. If you compare it, for example, to 947, you will see this is not quite the thing. Here are three species of languages and so on. And in 927 there were three species of governments. This simplest of forms - that he repeats the title of the section in the beginning of the section occurs only here. I notice it is one of the many funny things our author does.

Student: inaudible reference to paragraph 935.

Strauss: We will come to that. I only wanted to show that these three subsequent sections - the seventh, sixth, and fifth - have this beginning peculiar to them which we find nowhere else in this book.

We have to reflect a bit about these strange things and it is a bit unpleasant because we don't have a solution to them. But we

must note these things if we want to have an overall picture of Vico.

I would like to mention one point, by the way. While I was unable to do my regular work, I reread the Autobiography and I agree much more now with Mr. \_\_\_\_\_ than I did then. I found quite a few things which are so blaring that I cannot understand how I could have overlooked them. Well, I will take this up in the last meeting.

So let us go on now. Paragraph 933.

Student: "The first were divine, properly called hieroglyphics, used, as we have shown above, by all nations in their beginnings."

Strauss: By all nations, not gentiles. So there must also have been such a stage in the Jewish development.

The end of the next paragraph.

Student: "These imaginative genera, as the human mind later learned to abstract forms and properties from subjects, passed over into intelligible genera, which prepared the way for the philosophers, from whom the authors of the New Comedy, which came in the most civilized times of Greece, took the intelligible genera of human customs and portrayed them in their comedies."

Strauss: You know this already: concepts, comedies. First you have images of general meaning. So Achilles does not mean this particular individual, but this type of individual. You know that. But concepts - say, not Solon, but legislator- that comes much later. And the New Comedy which, in effect, means \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ - they are very high because it is post-philosophic poetry. Poetry which could use the achievements of philosophy. Very interesting. Wholly unromantic and an important correction of the view promoted by Croce and others.

Now we come to paragraph 935. That is the one you meant.

Student: No. I meant 925. He uses the past tense.

Strauss: Oh. Very good. And only when he comes to speak of the human does he use the present tense. In other words, he - Vico himself - lived in the human stage.

Student: inaudible

Strauss: Yes, he certainly knew of what are now called the new nations. They didn't call them new nations at the time. And, of course, not all new nations. Not like Europe. But of the Africans, I believe, they would simply have said savages. They belonged to a pre-human stage in history. He has given examples of this: Parallels between the North American Indians and the early Romans and Greeks, for example.

But we must never forget that Vico is a man of great common sense as I gradually came to see. It took me a very long time. And he was, of course, most concerned with his area - Europe. Because Europe, I am sorry to say, was the most advanced place in the world. If, after all, Bacon and Newton are such terrific fellows as he saw them, and they were undoubtedly European, they were superior,

he would have said. Today these things are no longer sayable, but I think that here in class they may be said. We are not here in the United Nations.

Now, paragraph 935.

Student: "Finally, there were invented the vulgar characters . . . where the authors of what we call vulgar letters are depicted along with their alphabets."

Strauss: You see how much he can quote learned literature. Go on.

Student: "But such an opinion can be convicted of manifest falsity if we pose the simple question: Why did they not teach letters of their own creation? We have raised this difficulty in the case of Cadmus above, who brought letters from Phoenician to the Greeks, and the latter afterwards used letters of very different forms from the Phoenicians."

Strauss: Here is a reference to paragraph 440. The discovery of letters was something more than human. Think of one hundred and twenty thousand letters. Who can invent them? Something more than human, but not divine. Rather to be ascribed to divines, to theologians which, of course, is not ascribing them to God with all due respect for the theologians. Yet even this is wrong. For the letters were not invented by the divines in question, but only brought by them to the peoples in question. These peoples themselves, not the divines, transformed the letters brought to them into different letters. Is this correct so far as St. Cyril goes, Mr. \_\_\_\_\_?

Student: Yes.

Strauss: That is the only way in which I could make sense of it. It is a very strange paragraph. In brief, if you follow the argument, the discovery of letters is human. First, it seems to be greater than human. Therefore, it is ascribed to divines. But these divines were not truly the creators of these alphabets because they brought letters, i.e. they had not invented them. And the letters as they became adopted by the Slavs and other nations were the work of these Slavs and other peoples. This is one of the dark paragraphs which I believe I could follow.

In the next paragraph he makes very clear the point that basic popular sovereignty survived in absolute monarchy. Absolute monarchies are supported by the people against the powerful. We will come back to that later.

At the beginning of the next section he discusses the human origin of letters and so on. This human origin is, in fact, a popular origin. Let us read the beginning of 937 and 938.

Student: "Three kinds of jurisprudence or wisdom.

"The first was a divine wisdom, called, as we have seen, mystic theology"

Strauss: You see. He himself says mystic. But it means originally not what mysticism came to mean in the advanced age. Originally



it meant the science of theology. Go on.

Student: "which means the science of divine speech or the understanding of the divine mysteries of divination. This science of auspicial divinity was the vulgar wisdom whose sages were the theological poets, who were the first sages of the gentile world."

Strauss: We can leave it at that. So these letters have a popular origin. But, still, there is another problem here which does not yet come out here. No, it is only implied. But the implication is this: In the Roman case, this religion was a privilege or monopoly of the patricians. While this was popular wisdom, it was yet used against the plebs. This will come clearer, I think, in the sequel.

Now, paragraph 939 draws our attention to the fact which we know already, that heroic jurisprudence or wisdom was also in the Middle Ages. This returned barbarism is naturally barbarism.

Let us then read 940 following.

Student: "The third is human jurisprudence, which looks to the truth of the facts themselves and benignly bends the rule of law to all the requirements of the equity of the causes. This kind of jurisprudence is observed in the free popular commonwealths and even more under the monarchies, which are both human governments."

"Thus divine and heroic jurisprudence laid hold of the certain when the nations were rude, and human jurisprudence looked to the true when they became enlightened. All this in consequence of the definitions of the certain and the true, and of the axioms set forth on the matter in our Elements."

Strauss: What does he mean there? The rational jurisprudence or wisdom is at home only under the human government, but in monarchies more than in democracies. This rational jurisprudence belongs to enlightened nations. No divine jurisprudence or wisdom there.

Paragraph 942.

Student: "There were three kinds of authority. The first is divine, and of this we ask no accounting by providence. The second is heroic, resting entirely on the solemn formulae of the laws. The third is human, based on the trust placed in persons of experience, of singular prudence in practical matters, and of sublime wisdom in intellectual matters."

Strauss: Providence is not questioned in the case of divine authority because you cannot question divine authority. In the case of heroic authority which is justified by reference to solemn laws you can at least see what the solemn laws say provided that you have access to those laws, i.e. provided the laws are written or published. In the case of human authority it is justified by the wisdom - practical and theoretical - of the rulers, not monarchy. At any rate, the true title to rule - the old story - is wisdom. Even Vico repeats that here.

In paragraph 943. . .

Student: "These three kinds of authority employed by jurisprudence in the course which the nations take, correspond to three sorts of authority appertaining to senates, which succeed one another in the aforesaid course."

Strauss: There is everywhere a senate. Naturally, if wisdom - especially practical wisdom - is required, there must be a body of men representing the practical collective wisdom of the people. That would be given to older men. The senate is a group of the senex - of the older men. That is clear. But there are certain difficulties as is made clear in the next paragraph. There is, of course, no senate in the state of nature, but in the aristocratic stage. Let us read this next paragraph.

Student: "The first was the authority of property ownership . . . Afterwards in the heroic aristocracies in which the senates were the seat of sovereignty (as they are in the aristocracies of our own time)"

Strauss: So, in other words, there are still aristocracies in the world. He means Venice and some other places which he mentions. Yes?

Student: "authority quite properly was vested in these reigning senates . . . just as is the case when magistrates are nominated by the people under monarchies."

Strauss: Go on to the beginning of the next paragraph.

Student: "From the time of the law of Publilius Philo, which declared the Roman people free and absolute sovereign of the empire, as stated above, the authority of the senate was that of guardianship"

Strauss: In other words, the government was the people, but the people in its wisdom recognized that it needed guidance. This guidance was advice, not command. This advice was given by the senate. Continue in the middle of that paragraph.

Student: All this in order that the people, in decreeing the laws, might not, by reason of their weak counsel, do any harm to the commonwealth, and in order that, in decreeing them, they might be regulated by the senate."

Strauss: In other words, the Roman people were sensible.

Next paragraph.

Student: "Finally the commonwealth passed from popular liberty to monarchy, and there ensued the third kind of authority, which is that of credit or reputation for wisdom; and hence the authority of counsel, in respect of which the jurisconsults under the emperors were said to be auctores. Such also must be the authority of senates under monarchs, who have full and absolute liberty to follow or not to follow the counsel their senates give them."

Strauss: In other words, where do senates have a greater chance to be heard? Legally, the situation is the same. The sovereign people

may reject the counsel of the senate as well as the monarch may. But where are the chances greater? I have the feeling that he gives the edge to democracy. We will come across other passages. In other words, the issue of monarchy and democracy is not yet settled. And I believe that you yourself didn't believe that.

Let us go now to paragraph 948.

Student: "The first kind of reason is divine and understood only by God . . . they take refuge in the inscrutable counsels hidden in the abyss of divine providence."

Strauss: We will get a clearer picture of this subject touched upon at the end as we go on. Here I will mention only one thing. The divine reason is effective in both Judaism and Christianity on the one hand, and paganism on the other in different ways. But this is the second and last mention of Jesus Christ.

At any rate, read superficially, this ninth section begins in an orthodox way. Let us read the sequel of this in the next paragraph.

Student: "The second was reason of state . . . which is to say down to the time of the Gracchi."

Strauss: If this is not a statement in favor of democracy in a writer like Vico, I don't know what it is. Absolute silence about monarchy because what was the senate under the emperor compared to then?

I think we get here an inkling of his procedure. In this brief chapter - consisting only of two paragraphs - he makes first a statement which is theologically tolerably orthodox. In this connection he can make a statement which is political and I wonder if that is not part of the game - that the fully theological and political heterodoxy never comes out together. Here there is a very strange silence about monarchs.

Student: inaudible

Strauss: This was a gross overstatement (inaudible). Here he states, as it were, the Platonic notion without omitting anything.

Student: At the end of paragraph 948 he implies that references to divine providence mean that you have not yet sufficiently explicated the reason of state. An improved version of the New Science - if such were publishable - would ipso facto have much less . . .

Strauss: There is a famous statement of Spinoza in the appendix to the first book of the \_\_\_\_\_ about the refuge to providence as the \_\_\_\_\_. In other words, when you cannot understand something. The idea, incidentally, doesn't stem from Spinoza. It stems from Cicero somewhere. I cannot say where in Cicero. I would have to look it up, but it is a much older thing.

Now paragraph 950.

Student: "Here arises the problem which seems very difficult to solve. How is it that the Romans could have been so wise in

statecraft in the rude times of Rome, when in their enlightened times Ulpian says that "today only a few experts in government understand statecraft"? The answer is that, by virtue of the same natural causes which produced the heroism of the first peoples, the ancient Romans, who were the heroes of the world"

Strauss: In other words, they were much more than one special case of heroes. Yes?

Student: "naturally looked to civil equity, which was most scrupulous about the words in which the laws were expressed. By this superstitious observance of their words, they made the laws march straight (in accordance with what we have said above), just as reason of state operates today."

Strauss: And reason of state is the center of the thing. That is the implication. Reason of state as distinguished from the superstitious respect for the letter of the law. Yes?

Student: "Thus civil equity naturally subordinated everything to that law, queen of all others, conceived by Cicero with a gravity adequate to the matter, "Let the safety of the people be the supreme law."

Strauss: Still, it is slightly different from what I said. This is really the highest law, and that is civil equity. The supreme law is the safety of the people, the well-being of the people. This is civil equity proper. This implies - and I think that this is the point which I didn't get - all kinds of hardships possibly.

But this reason of state is distinguished from heroic law because it is not superstitious. It is not enslaved by formulae. This much is clear. But as far as occasional harshness goes, it can be as harsh as heroic right. Yes?

Student: Earlier you said that civil equity is nothing but reason of state. That it is equivalent to it.

Strauss: Well, he is a very nimble and flexible fellow and, therefore, we have to be nimble too. If he analyzes reason of state in a Machiavellian sense - do I make myself clear? For example, old property rights, vested interests create problems. You confiscate. You can give token compensations if you are nice. You know this kind of thing. Are you familiar with this kind of thing? In former times this was regarded as absolutely terrible. And not only around 1900 by the damned reactionaries then. Interference the age old law and custom was regarded as a very grave matter.

Student: He distinguishes reason of state from natural reason. And I wonder if the distinction between reason of state and civil equity is really very important. I think that the distinction between reason of state and, for instance, natural reason, or the distinction between civil equity and natural equity are rather more important distinctions. They are not equivalent.

Strauss: No. They are surely not equivalent. But this much we know. Natural equity is something which you can have for the asking, so to speak. You don't need to have practiced anything to have natural equity. Civil equity is the thing which the true

lawyer and judge and senator acquires.

Now while civil equity is, as such, explicitly recognized as the highest law in the human state, it is in fact effective also in the heroic state. But it is not there recognized as reason of state. They say that if we do this and this kind of religious ceremony . . . This overrides all considerations of utility. They do not know sufficiently that this ceremony is as much created by concern for the common good of that government - the patrician government - as, say, inheritance taxes are with the common good of a radical democracy. To restate it in a formula, the reason of state is always present. It is always active as long as there are civil societies. But it is not necessarily always known to be reason of state. That it is pursued as such is a characteristic of human government.

Is there any other complication which you see here that we haven't faced?

Student: You were saying that the earliest people didn't realize that it was reason of state, and yet in the very beginning here he says: (inaudible)

Strauss: Oh, I see. I think that there is a certain irony here. The old Romans were so very wise because that kind of wisdom on which they acted did not require a high degree of judgement. For example, there are certain notions regarding a just war. All priests say that. Every patrician, let us say. This didn't require special judgement, but the true politics ask, "It is expedient to wage war or not?" not "Is it a religious duty to wage war?" This is the political question proper. That is what I think he means. Heroic wisdom is popular wisdom necessarily. Nevertheless a preserve of that people. The people in a heroic sense are, of course, only the patricians. But every patrician had that wisdom. Whereas this wisdom of which Ulpian speaks is a preserve in any regime of a small group. This is not, I think, a great difficulty, but it is good that we discussed it.

What I didn't see in my previous reading was the harshness of reason of state.

There was here something else. One can say that civil equity is reason of state in the original aristocracy where there was coincidence between the private interest of the nobles and the common good of the state consisting of the nobles. You remember that we have brought that out more than once. And the question now which I think that we must face is: Will there be such a coincidence of the private interest of the individual and the common good in democracy.

Now paragraph 951. Here he deals with the question of equity.

Lecture XVII

Vico: The New Science, December 4, 1963

Now this is our last meeting and we have quite a bit of material which we have to cover. I want to briefly discuss with you also some passages in the Autobiography which we did not consider in the beginning.

We were in the middle of a chapter - paragraph 1039. I think we should read this paragraph.

Student: "The interpreters of Roman law have rested the entire reputation of legal metaphysics on the consideration of the indivisibility of rights in their famous treatment of the famous subject of divisibles and indivisibles."

Strauss: Yes. This refers back to the preceding paragraph where he spoke of this: the indivisible character of rights because rights as rights are not bodily beings. But in the early stage of mankind when man was unable to grasp anything but bodily things, you had to have at least symbols - bodily representatives of non-bodily things. Non-bodily things were never understood. Go on.

Student: "But they have not considered the other and no less important . . . For time cannot give a beginning or put an end to the eternal."

Strauss: Right as right has eternal being because it is not bodily, because it is not divisible. Go on.

Student: "and in usucapion and prescription time neither . . . the first man, who was the prince of the human race, and of the ownership which he held over the whole earth."

Strauss: The latter, of course, is reminiscent of a Biblical passage about the beginning of the creation of man. So all right stems from God. That is the conclusion, and it derives from the right given to Adam. And this would mean, of course, the strictly Biblical account, on the whole. To state it very simply, legal metaphysics of which is spoken frequently is civil theology because these first men for a million years over the whole earth  
(inaudible)

But you see here also other implications. He speaks here of two rules of law which lead, then, to two most important corollaries. The first is the end as distinguished from the reason. Now what does that mean? Man was created for the sake of men, namely, that he rule over the whole earth. And the second principle concerns eternity. This is the conclusion that all rights stem from the eternal being, that is, from God.

We have here a suggestion of legal metaphysics. I wonder if this term "legal metaphysics" has ever been used by anybody prior to Vico. Let us see what he is driving at. The next paragraph, please.

Student: "Now, because laws certainly came first and . . . to make up a genus of that in respect of which the particulars are uniform among themselves."

Strauss: So philosophy stems directly from legislation, but from the legislation in the Athenian democracy. So the overall thesis as suggested here is what he had, of course, suggested all the time. He accepts the Biblical revelation and therefore some form of credal theology including moral theology. This is the over-arching teaching. And philosophy came to occupy only a limited place in that sphere.

What he says in paragraph 1040 does not formally contradict that. Philosophy comes after the laws and all the laws point to God as the legislator. But from which is the peculiar law and legislation out of which philosophy emerged. Are they democratic? Next paragraph.

Student: "Plato, reflecting that in such public assemblies . . . and thus he reached the height of conceiving the philosophical hero who commands his passions at will."

Strauss:

(inaudible)

What he says at the beginning of the paragraph seems to anticipate a thought which has since become very famous after Vico. Does it remind you of someone? The idea free from passion of the common utility which emerges somehow from passionate ideas of one's private good.

Student: The idea of the general will.

Strauss: Yes, it is amazingly close. Of course, the key point is that one has to give one's private passion or desire the form of law. Let me give you a very simple example. I don't want to pay taxes. That is my private desire. But this is not so simple. You have to make a proposal. There ought to be a law that no one has to pay taxes, and then I may come to my senses and see that if no one pays taxes I myself will suffer most. And then I will abandon my plan. There are certainly more complicated examples and this case seems very unlikely, but otherwise it comes very close. Will divorced from pride and the interests of passion. Then you have a purely rational will. But, still, this rational will somehow survives. The common good is each one's private good. Consider paragraph 341 where this is dealt with.

Now let us see the next stage of this development. Because here in this section at the end of Book IV he deals with the relation of the whole new science to the law.

Student: "The way was thus prepared for the divine definition which Aristotle later gave us of a good law as a will free of passion, which is to say the will of the hero. He understood justice as queen of the virtues, seated in the spirit of the hero and commanding all the others."

Strauss: Do you see the difference between Aristotle and Plato which he is describing? Justice resides in the mind of the hero. Whereas the Platonic idea resides in the mind of God. Go on.

Student: "For he had observed legal justice . . . Pythagoras who later became a sublime philosopher and mathematician."

Strauss: The historical facts surrounding Aristotle's discussion are correct here. Let us see what he says. Aristotle, too, started from a democratic concept. He thus was able to see the necessity of both distributive and communitive justice in contradistinction to the ancient law, the \_\_\_\_\_, where the people were dealt with tit for tat.

The democratic background is of some importance here for the whole question of Vico's judgement of democracy and monarchy. Aristotle feels that justice resides in the mind of the hero - of a philosophic hero or something like it. You see that he observes here complete silence on Aristotelian theology and metaphysics, whereas he speaks of the Platonic theology to some extent. Now what is the conclusion about that? Next paragraph.

Student: "From all the above we conclude that these principles of metaphysics, logic and morals issued from the market place of Athens. From Solon's advice to the Athenians, "Know thyself" (as set forth above in one of the corollaries of our Poetic Logic), came forth the popular commonwealths, from the popular commonwealths the laws, and from the laws emerged philosophy."

Strauss: So there can be no doubt about the democratic origin of philosophy.

Student: "And Solon, who had been wise in vulgar wisdom, came to be held wise in esoteric wisdom."

Strauss: In other words, that was an error. But the true thing was that Solon stood for democracy. Democracy was the matrix on which his philosophy was built. Yes?

Student: "This may serve as a fragment of the history of philosophy told philosophically, and a last reproof, of the many brought forth in this work, against Polybius who said that if there were philosophers in the world there would be no need of religions. For the fact is that if there had not been religions and hence commonwealths, there would have been no philosophers in the world, and if human affairs had not been thus guided by divine providence there would have been no idea of either science or virtue."

Strauss: We have already heard this argument and considered it. I think that we will tentatively leave that here.

Regarding his way of writing I have a note which is not sufficient, but which you should consider. At the beginning of the next paragraph he uses the expression, "\_\_\_\_\_", returning to the purpose, a phrase which occurs also elsewhere - 1020 and 1021. I have mentioned on other occasions the use which Machiavelli makes in the Discourses of the expression. I have discussed this same subject also from other sources. This phrase in 1021 I have not seen elsewhere.

When he says here, "To return to the proposito," that means that we have left the subject. In other words, what preceded this was a digression. Now I think that if you would follow it up you would



see that paragraph 1031 to paragraph 1043 is a digression. And it is very interesting that this discussion of legal metaphysics which we find here, and the fact that philosophy derives from law, particularly democratic law, belongs to this digression. How to interpret that is an entirely different question.

So let us now turn to the fifth book, the last book. Let us begin with paragraph 1047.

Student: "When, working in superhuman ways, God had revealed and confirmed the truth of the Christian religion by opposing the virtue of the martyrs to the power of Rome, and the teaching of the Fathers, together with the miracles, to the empty wisdom of Greece, and when armed nations were about to arise on every hand destined to combat the true divinity of its Founder, He permitted a new order of humanity to emerge among the nations in order that the true religion might be firmly established according to the natural course of human affairs."

Strauss: This is a very complicated sentence. God is not explicitly mentioned in the original. I wonder whether a more literal rendering of the passage wouldn't say that Christ should be the true divinity of his author. This was questioned by the Arians of the time - whether he does not have Christ in mind. So the Christian religion was made firm by the martyrs and so on. But the divinity of Christ was to be established firmly by the natural development of the new nations. The documents say, then, that according to the natural course of these same human things the Christian religion should be firmly established. The establishment of the Christian religion was to take place by natural means. The subject of the last book is really called the repetition of what happened after antiquity, i.e. the modern nations, the Christian nations. Therefore, the primary subject of the last book, more obviously, is the Christian religion.

But how did this natural establishment of the Christian religion happen? Let us read only the last sentence.

Student: "Thus the first Christian kings founded armed religions by which they reestablished in their realms the Catholic Christian religion against the Arians (by whom St. Jerome says almost the whole Christian world was befouled), and against the Saracens and numerous other infidels."

Strauss: Now this expression "armed religion," does this remind you of something?

Student: inaudible

Strauss: I don't believe that he says it, but surely that is the point. So these are armed religions. And here he uses a cautious phrase: "the reestablishment of the Catholic religion" not the original establishment.

At the beginning of paragraph 1050 that this is a recurrence of human civil things. It is a human history underlying natural equity in modern times as well as ancient times. The miraculous beginning is not denied, but is somehow not used as an explanation. Yes?

Student: inaudible

Strauss: Well he speaks of providence all the time. The question is: What does he mean by it? Does he mean anything but a natural process which leads up to something unintended by the actors and superior to anything which the actors intended? That is the question. In other words, did he mean by providence something like Adam Smith meant by the "invisible hand?" That is the question all the time.

In paragraph 1055 he speaks again of the savagery of religious wars in the Middle Ages and beyond. Let us read paragraph 1056.

Student: "But the most striking recurrence of human things in this connection was the resumption in these divine times of the first asylums of the ancient world which, as we learned from Livy, all the first cities were founded."

Strauss: Remember that asylum has no other meaning than that it has in . The asylum was these impious savages. How does he call them? The impious tribes. They became, then, the families of Rome.

Student: "For everywhere violence, rapine and murder were rampant, because of the extreme ferocity and savagery of these most barbarous centuries."

Strauss: He means, of course, the Middle Ages. Yes?

Student: "Nor, as we said in the Axioms, was there any efficacious way of restraining men who had shaken off all human laws save by the divine law dictated by religion. Naturally, therefore, men in fear of being oppressed or destroyed betook themselves to the bishops and abbots of those violent centuries, as being comparatively humane in the midst of such barbarism."

Strauss: It is not quite literal, but that is what he means. Literally, being in such barbarism more gentle. Yes?

Student: "and put themselves, their families and their patrimonies under their protection, and were received by them. Such submission and such protection are the principle constitutive elements of fiefs."

Strauss: If we knew nothing but that - from Vico and his history - what would be the conclusion in the light of Vico's general thesis? That in the Middle Ages the only rulers - the patricians - were the hierarchy. I do not know whether Vico makes use of that. Machiavelli does in a subtle way. Sometimes when Machiavelli speaks of the , superficially it means the Roman Senate. But it has also the possible connotation - the clergy. Of course Vico knew that there was secular government. Let us go on.

Student: "Hence in Germany, which must have been the wildest and most savage of all the nations of Europe, there remained almost more ecclesiastical sovereigns (bishops or abbots) than secular; and, as we have said, in France all sovereign princes assumed the title of counts or dukes and abbots."

Strauss: So, in other words, there was really no secular government. There is some suggestion of it, but he has some statements about the ruling dukes who called themselves abbots. Yes?

Student: "Thus it came about that such an immense number of cities, towns and castles in Europe were named after saints; for in high or hidden places, in order to hear mass and perform the other offices of piety commanded by our religion"

Strauss: "Our" religion. One should notice how often he says "our" when referring to religion. In Machiavelli I counted them. I forgot exactly how many I counted. In The Prince he never uses it. In the Discourses he used it at least once. I have not done it in Vico because the question occurred to me only when I came to this passage. Yes?

Student: inaudible

Strauss: The Christian religion would be more neutral. Yes?

Student: "little churches were opened, which may be defined as the natural asylums of Christians in those times. . . and the abbots of San Lorenzo were barons of almost all the aforesaid places."

Strauss: What is suggested is this: In the Middle Ages you have a return of the old order. Now it was the Christian religion, but it was fundamentally the same as what you had at the beginning of the first barbarism: a religious order. And just as the first patri- cians were at the same time rulers and priests, the same was true of the second age.

Student: inaudible

Strauss: I see. You are quite right. In other words, it is exactly the same as what happened in the origin, only now it is the Christian religion and he does not speak here, at least, of the difference.

Let us see paragraph 1061. It is also very important. By the way the beginning of paragraph 1057 - the beginning of chapter II - is also very important. "Those divine times were followed by certain heroic times," the same as you had in the first age - divine order, heroic order. So feudalism proper is already heroic and no longer of the divine, or earlier, stage. Now paragraph 1061.

Student: "Once the power of the barons had been dispersed . . . a trace of this survives in the Spanish varon for a man; the vassals, because of their weakness, being regarded as women in the heroic sense above explained."

Strauss: Do you see something very strange here in this story?

Student: The term "supposed difference of the two natures."

Strauss: Yes. That is very important. It refutes again Mr. we were claimed that there was truly a difference of nature. So that this was not a natural difference, but a believed or supposed difference. There is no question.

But something else. We had the divine age and then the heroic age. What comes next after the heroic age?

Student: There should be a democratic age.

Strauss: But it isn't in there. In the Middle Ages you could not speak of a democratic stage. Surely that is immensely important. No democracy in the modern development. Maybe Vico believed that it could come in the future - what from his time looked like the future - but it wasn't then. The modern development not in contradistinction to the Assyrian development, but to the Greek and Roman development. We know by now that the schema is not actual. The schema is: divine, heroic, democratic, monarchical. That is not universally true. He doesn't even attempt to prove that in Assyria or in Egypt there was a democratic age. But in Greece and Rome he can assert it. The modern - by which I mean the Christian - development does not have such a democratic age. This modern age is not favorable to freedom and equality. This is, I think, an indication of that. In paragraph 1076 there seems to be some confirmation of that.

Student: .inaudible

Strauss: You have this already in the heroic age - Aesop, for example. But it is not yet the establishment of popular rule. Mr. \_\_\_\_\_?

Student: What does this phrase "the supposed difference of the two natures" mean (Inaudible)

Strauss: Heroic can be as natural as truth, in one sense. If the hero arises naturally, and the truth also becomes known, then, naturally, to that extent both are equally natural. Yet since what came out naturally in the one stage was error and what came out in the other stage naturally was truth, the second is higher. Let me make a distinction which is now very popular - genesis and validity. Regarding the genesis they are all equally natural. But if we consider validity and say that is natural only which is true and valid, then, of course, only the democratic age, the human age, is natural.

We don't have time to read all of this. I can only say that 1076 and 1077 confirm this assertion that the democratic development is not noticeable in the modern times.

Paragraph 1063 we might also read.

Student: Doesn't he note that in Northern Italy at the time of the there were popular commonwealths. The landed nobility was subdued and those who didn't come in to the republican system petered out.

Strauss: The question is what he would have thought of it. When he speaks of contemporary Venice and I think also of Genoa, and surely of Nuremburg in Germany he calls them aristocracies. He would not regard them as popular governments, although if we look at it with detachment we could, of course, say that they were to some extent naturally popular. On the other hand, for example, Sparta is for him an aristocratic commonwealth to the end. Athens also had popular liberty and, of course, Rome in the later stages. Surely he doesn't speak here of the Italian cities. Although we

must not forget that the cities were surely subject to the Roman emperor. So they are not truly free cities. Even those which were immediately within the Empire - the free cities of the Empire - were still subject to the Emperor.

Paragraph 1063.

Student: "In this fashion the fiefs came back"

Strauss: According to his interpretation there were fiefs in early antiquity. We have seen that. Go on.

Student: "springing from the eternal source assigned to them in the Axioms, where we indicated the benefits which may be hoped for in the nature of civil things, whence with full Latin elegance and propriety the fiefs are called beneficia by the learned feudists."

Strauss: That is also nice - Latin terminology. Whether they are properly called beneficia is not the question.

Student: "Hotman indeed observes, but without making use of the point . . . in conformity with the practice which gave the ancient heroes the title of shepherds of the people."

Strauss: This raises some doubt as to whether - according to Vico - there can ever be unqualified equality and freedom even in Rome and in the splendor of Roman popular liberty.

Paragraph 1071. Here in this section from 1068 following we see the beginnings. "There was a return." There are altogether many such statements. Now in 1071 at the beginning.

Student: "And since barbarism with its violence destroys the confidence necessary to commerce"

Strauss: In other words, barbarism and commerce are incompatible. We have already seen the connection between stable popular government and commerce on a former occasion.

Let us go on to paragraph 172.

Student: "There was a return of mancipation, the vassal placing his hands between the hands of the lord to signify fealty and subjection. The rustic vassals under the census of Servius Tullius, as we noted not far back, were thus the first mancipes of the Romans. Along with mancipation there returned the division of things into res Mancipi and res nec Mancipi; for feudal estates were res nec Mancipi for the vassal, who cannot alienate them; but res Mancipi for the lord, just as the lands of the Roman provinces were res nec Mancipi for the provincials and res Mancipi for the Romans."

Strauss: And so on. The term occurs five times in this paragraph and this also would have to be considered.

Let us turn to paragraph 1074.

Student: "This 'authority' of the second barbarism, which we illuminate in this work as we do innumerable other things by reference

to the antiquities of the first barbarism (so much more obscure have we found the times of the second barbarism than those of the first).

Strauss: Why is the first barbarism not so obscure as the second? This will take a strange turn towards the end of this paragraph after he has quoted Bude when he speaks of this custom, meaning this feudal custom. Read that part.

Student: "This custom has lasted down to my time in our Kingdom of Naples"

Strauss: And so on. In other words, while this second barbarism lacks in certain places heroes - the Kingdom of Naples, for example - up to Vico's own time - in spite or because of that - the beginnings of the second barbarism are much darker than the beginnings of the first barbarism. How is this to be explained by virtue of what Vico has suggested before? How did Vico discover what happened truly in early antiquity against the fables which have come down?

Student: inaudible

Strauss: But who are the men who opened up for Vico to some extent the depths and origins of antiquity?

Student: inaudible

Strauss: Yes, but especially Thucydides and Aristotle. You remember at the beginning we discussed the men who helped Vico. Thucydides and Aristotle also play this role. There were no such enquirers of the European antiquity. There were no critical historians. I think that this is what he means. Yes?

Student: inaudible

Strauss: But these were very learned antiquarians and he could also have quoted - and he does quote - chroniclers. But are they critical? You must never forget the principle of this new science. Philology, as he calls it, comes in only after the axioms, the philosophic axioms. And these scholars, these antiquarians did not approach the matter on the basis of the axioms. The cooperation of philosophy and philology alone are part of the past according to him. Therefore, he selects with an amazing arbitrariness from these sources and from these scholars the facts which suit him. In other words, early men must have lived and thought in this and this manner. Hence, all institutions which correspond to this way of thinking can be credited with having been the institution of the time. Those which correspond to another way of thinking cannot possibly have existed.

Student: I was reminded that, at an earlier place, he draws attention to the fact that he has discussed in this work the first age and not the second. In the latter half of 1017 he speaks of "this most luminous truth which has been clearly demonstrated throughout this entire work, with particular reference to Roman history." This "luminous truth," namely that the plebs of the people always and in all nations have changed states from aristocratic to popular, from popular to monarchic.

Strauss: That is quite true. I suppose the references to Rome, to Roman law and so on are more important than the references to any other people, but one must not underestimate the references to Greece.

Student: But I wanted to deduce from this a further contribution to the democratic thinking of Vico: that his reason for preferring to talk about Rome is that there he can talk about the implements of the plebs.

Strauss: But that can be done everywhere. A well-known case is that of Livy - (inaudible)

Let us turn now to paragraph 1075.

Student: "And here is a very clear occasion for observing in the recurrence of nations a recurrence also of the lot of the later Roman jurisconsults in that of the later barbarian doctors. For just as the former in their times had already lost sight of early Roman law (as we have shown above by a thousand proofs), so the latter in their most recent times lost sight of early feudal law."

Strauss: Let us turn then to paragraph 1079.

Student: "This was because in the severity of those heroic times . . . relate that in the primitive state preceding the cities men led lives like so many Adams in the state of innocence."

Strauss: Let us stop here. He doesn't mention Adam too often, does he? That has something to do with what he said above. Here he speaks of the \_\_\_\_\_, i.e. of a nobleman. We must keep in mind what he said before about the power of the clergy. The error in the interpretation of all these interpreters consisted in the belief in a golden age of innocence at the beginning. And, of course, the Bible, too, tells of such an age as we are reminded here by the mention of Adam. That is, indeed, the key consequence of the axioms from which he starts. The beginning was bestiality, not virgin humanity. All his historical reinterpretations follow from this premise. It follows from the assumption that the mind of man was originally sub-rational. A passionate imagination. The nice way of putting it is to say that early men were poets. But we must not deceive ourselves about the very harsh meaning of this kind of poetry.

But you see also how Romanticism could then restore the other view - the view opposed by Vico - and then say that it sounds very nice. The early men were poets and prose came much later.

Now, paragraph 1080.

Student: "In these parliaments were discussed feudal causes concerning rights or successions or devolutions of fiefs by reason of felony or default of heirs. Such causes, when they had been confirmed many times by such adjudications, formed the customs of feudalism which are the most ancient of all the customs of Europe and which prove to us that the natural law of nations was born of these human customs of the fiefs, as has been fully shown above."

Strauss: The oldest European right - the heroic right - is human. He says "these human customs of the fiefs." This is where the Christian heritage enters.

Now paragraph 1083.

Student: "From all the matters here enumerated, we must conclude that the realms were everywhere aristocratic, we do not say in constitution but in government, as in the cold north that of Poland is (and as those of Sweden and Denmark were until a century and a half ago). In time, if extraordinary causes do not impede its natural course, Poland will arrive at perfect monarchy."

Strauss: You see the importance of climate: in the "cold north." These are all northern nations to which he is referring - Germany, Sweden, Denmark, and Norway. So it is by no means just true. As Nicolini says, there is only a single reference to matters of climate. But the indications are, of course, here and in some other places.

But you see here that things have changed in Sweden and Denmark from 150 years ago. Nicolini denies the fact - and I agree more with Nicolini than I do with Vico on this matter - but, still, what happened 150 years ago in these Scandanavian countries? The Reformation.

So the transition from aristocracy to monarchy is by Vico connected with historical correctness or incorrectness. I do not care now about the Reformation. But extraordinary causes may prevent that development. Extraordinary causes - non-natural causes.